PROJECT EXCELLENCE

A Case Study of a Student-Centred Secondary School

Principal Investigators
STEPHEN ANDERSON
SUZANNE STIEGELBAUER

Co-investigators
DIANE GÉRIN-LAJOIE
HUGH PARTLOW
ART CUMMINS

This research project was funded under contract by the Ministry of Education, Ontario.
It reflects the views of the authors and not necessarily those of the Ministry.

Sean Conway, Minister
Bernard J. Shapiro, Deputy Minister

Ministry
of
Education

90-06414/

PROJECT EXCELLENCE

A Case Study of a Student-Centred Secondary School

Principal Investigators
STEPHEN ANDERSON
SUZANNE STIEGELBAUER

Co-investigators
DIANE GÉRIN-LAJOIE
HUGH PARTLOW
ART CUMMINS

This research project was funded under contract by the Ministry of Education, Ontario.

It reflects the views of the authors and not necessarily those of the Ministry.

Sean Conway, Minister
Bernard J. Shapiro, Deputy Minister

© QUEEN'S PRINTER FOR ONTARIO, 1990

Order Information:

MGS Publications Services
880 Bay Street, 5th Floor
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1N8
(416) 965-6015
(Toll Free) 1-800-268-7540
(Toll Free from area code 807,
ask operator for Zenith 67200).

Order must be accompanied by a
cheque or money order payable
to the Treasurer of Ontario

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Anderson, Stephen E.
Project Excellence : a case study of a student-centred secondary school

Issued also in French under title: Une étude de cas du projet Excellence.
Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN 0-7729-6190-5

1. Individualized instruction--Case studies.
2. Education, Secondary--Ontario--Case studies.
I. Stiegelbauer, Suzanne. II. Ontario. Ministry of Education. III. Title. IV. Title: A case study of student-centred secondary school.

LB1031.A52 1989 373.13'94'09713142 C89-099664-4

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT vii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS viii

PART A: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY 1

1.1 Historical Background 1
1.2 Community and School System Characteristics 3

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS 4

2.1 Overview of the Study 4
2.2 Theoretical Framework 5
2.3 Organization of the Report 6

PART B: PROJECT EXCELLENCE ORGANIZATION

CHAPTER 3: OVERVIEW OF PROJECT EXCELLENCE 7

3.1 The Structure of Project Excellence 7
3.2 Special Programs and Services 11

CHAPTER 4: ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY 18

4.1 Introduction 18
4.2 Initiation 19
4.3 Project Management 20
4.4 Implementation Assistance 23
4.5 Implementation Evaluation 28
4.6 Critical Concerns in Project Development and Implementation 31
4.7 Evaluation of the Implementation Process 48

PART C: ROLES IN PROJECT EXCELLENCE

CHAPTER 5: THE TEACHER ROLE IN PROJECT EXCELLENCE 61

5.1 Design for Evaluation of Teacher Implementation 61
5.2 Teacher Advisor Role Implementation 62
5.3 Subject Teacher Role Implementation 67
5.4 Changes in Teacher Role 72
5.5 The Difficulty of the Change 79

CHAPTER 6: ADMINISTRATIVE ROLES IN PROJECT EXCELLENCE . 82

6.1 The Department Head Role in Project Excellence 82
6.2 The Role of Principals and Vice-principals 86

CHAPTER 7: STUDENT ROLE IN PROJECT EXCELLENCE 93

7.1 Design for Evaluation of Student Implementation 93
7.2 Overview of the Student Role and Workday 94
7.3 Student Role Findings and Discussion 94
7.4 Recommendations for the Student Role 108
7.5 Changes in the Student Role 109

CHAPTER 8: PARENT ROLE IN PROJECT EXCELLENCE 114

8.1 Design for Evaluation of Parent Role Implementation 114
8.2 Description of Ideal Parent Role 114
8.3 Findings for Parent Role Implementation 115
8.4 Recommendations for the Parent Role 120
8.5 Changes in the Parent Role 121

CHAPTER 9: SUPPORT STAFF ROLES IN PROJECT EXCELLENCE . 124

9.1 The Secretary Role 124
9.2 The Resource Centre Assistant Role 127

PART D: CURRICULUM AND STUDENT OUTCOMES

CHAPTER 10: CURRICULUM ANALYSIS 130

10.1 Course Maintenance 130
10.2 Ministry Guidelines and E.S.C.H.S. Courses 136

CHAPTER 11: STUDENT OUTCOMES: CREDITS, MARKS, DROPOUTS, AND TRANSFERS 151

11.1 Credit Completion Rates 151
11.2 Marks 158
11.3 Dropout Rates 162
11.4 Transfer Students 165

CHAPTER 12: STUDENT OUTCOMES: TEACHER AND STUDENT PERCEPTIONS 176

12.1 Overview 176
12.2 Performance 178
12.3 Approach to Learning 183
12.4 Attitudes Towards Learning and School 188
12.5 Social Development 191
12.6 Relative Impact on Different Students 194
12.7 Conclusions About Student Outcomes 195

CHAPTER 13: PROVINCIAL GOALS OF EDUCATION 198

13.1 The Requirements of OSIS. 198
13.2 Response to the Provincial Goals of Education 199
13.3 Conclusions About Project Excellence and the Goals of Education 208

PART E: PARTICIPANT ATTITUDES, OPINIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 14: OPINIONS, CONCERNS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS ABOUT PROJECT EXCELLENCE 210

14.1 Current School Preference and General Opinions 210
14.2 Perceived Strengths of Project Excellence 212
14.3 Perceived Weaknesses of Project Excellence 216
14.4 Concerns of Project Participants 221
14.5 Participant Recommendations for Project Excellence 227
14.6 Recommendations Based on Concerns of Project Participants ... 228

PART F: DIFFUSION FEASIBILITY

CHAPTER 15: DIFFUSION FEASIBILITY STUDY 229

15.1 Survey of Alternative Schools with Similar Programs 229
15.2 Summary of Contacts with Visitors to Project Excellence 241
15.3 Schools With More Than 500 Students 243
15.4 Factors to be Considered in Introducing an Independent Learning System 244

BIBLIOGRAPHY 250

APPENDIXES

A. Request for Research Proposal: Project Excellence 252

B. Summary of Research Components and Methods 257

C. Data Gathering Instruments and Sample Size 260

D. Project Excellence Checklist 262

E. Profile of Component Variations in Use 271

F. Statistical Profile of Respondents to Student Questionnaire and Interviews 273

G. Frequency Distribution: Student Role and Opinions Questionnaire 276

H. Statistical Profile of Respondents to Parent Role and Opinions Questionnaire 279

I. Frequency Distribution: Parent Role and Opionions Questionnaire 282

J. Curriculum Sample Criteria and Distribution 284

K. Average Marks by Subject 287

L. Average Marks by Subject and Level 288

M. Average Marks by Subject and Grade 290

N. Comparison of Grade 13 Averages to Provincial Averages 291

O. Profile of Transfer Student Interview Sample 292

P. Recommendations of Parents, Students, and Teachers 293

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4-1 Implementation Management Structures 21

Table 4-2 Implementation Assistance to Teachers and the Administration . . 25

Table 4-3 Implementation Evaluation 29

Table 4-4 Critical Concerns in Project Development and Implementation . . . 33

Table 4-5 Stages of Concern: Typical Expressions of Concern about an Innovation 50

Table 4-6 Role Concerns of Teachers: Implementation Years One, Two, and Three 52

Table 4-7 Concerns Profile for all Teachers 53

Table 4-8 Levels of Use of Project Excellence 56

Table 4-9 Status of Project Excellence Institutionalization 59

Table 7-1 Unique Behaviours of Students who Agree/Disagree that "This system works for me" 105

Table 7-2 Unique Behaviours of University/College-Bound Students and Other Students 105

Table 10-1 Course Deletions Before and After Project Excellence 132

Table 10-2 Project Excellence Enrolment Statistics 1986 and 1987 133

Table 10-3 Summary Analysis of E.S.C.H.S. Written Courses 139

Table 10-4 Ratings for Degree of Use of Ministry Suggestions for Methodology in 24 Sample Courses 146

Table 11-1 Annual Course Completion Rates for the Three School Years Prior to Project Excellence 1982/83 to 1984/85 152

Table 11-2 Credit Completion Rates for Students Entering Grade 9 in 1985/86, 1986/87, and 1987/88 154

Table 11-3 Work in Progress Rates for Students Entering Grade 9 in 1985/86, 1986/87, and 1987/88 154

Table 11-4 Credit Completion Rates for Students in Advanced, General, and Basic Courses Who Entered Grade 9 in 1985/86, 1986/87, and 1987/88 155

Table 11-5 Dropout Rate Comparisons Pre/Post Project Excellence 164

Table 11-6 Transfer Students at I.F.S.S. 167

Table 11-7 Student Reasons for Transfer to Other Schools 168

Table 12-1 Teacher and Student Perceptions of Student outcomes 177

Table 13-1 The Provincial Goals of Education 201

Table 14-1 School Preference of Teachers, Students, and Parents 211

Table 14-2 Student and Parent General Opinions About Project Excellence . . 211

Table 14-3 Perceived Strengths of Project Excellence 212

Table 14-4 Perceived Weaknesses of Project Excellence 216

Table 14-5 Concerns of the Administration 224

Table 15-1 Classification of Individualized Programs in Other Schools 231

Table 15-2 Levels of Difficulty of Individualized Programs in Other Schools 234

Table 15-3 Grade Levels of Individualized Programs in Other Schools 234

Table 15-4 Suitability for Students of Independent Study Programs 238

ABSTRACT

This report presents a case study evaluation of a mastery system of individualized instruction called Project Excellence at École Secondaire Cochrane High School, Cochrane Iroquois Falls-Black River Matheson Board of Education, Cochrane, Ontario. In this system, the curriculum consists of 20-unit learning guides in all courses. Students work in subject area resource centres and consult with teachers as needed. Teachers function as developers and consultants for particular courses, and as advisors to groups of 12 to 15 students. Students organize their own timetables and progress at their own rate.

The evaluation was conducted during the third year of implementation. The study includes descriptions of the Project design; the roles of teachers, students, administrators, support staff, and parents; and the organizational process used to initiate, develop, implement, and maintain the Project. The Project design and implementation process are evaluated in terms of implementation progress; the expected and actual behaviours of teachers, students, and parents; student outcomes; the attitudes and opinions of students, parents, and school personnel; provincial curriculum policies and the goals of education.

The study concludes that a short (9 month) timeline for development hindered the initial adjustment to the system for teachers and students. The support system for early implementation, however, was highly effective. By year three, teachers and students had settled into the new routines and refinements were being made to better adapt the system to student needs. Average marks for students increased 15 to 20 percentage points in all subjects, grades, and levels. Evidence suggests that students, on the whole, are learning to accept greater responsibility for their own learning and to become more self-directed learners. The major concern identified is the difficulty that students have accumulating credits at a sufficient rate to graduate in four years. Teachers are highly satisfied with their new roles and the observed outcomes for students. Students and parents are evenly divided in their preferences for Project Excellence or a traditional system of education. With sufficient start-up time, and support from all participant groups, this system could be replicated as an alternative high school in other school boards across the province.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our appreciation to the administrators, teachers, students, support staff, and parents at École Secondaire Cochrane High School for their genuine interest and willing collaboration in this evaluation of Project Excellence. We extend our appreciation as well to the principals of the following schools for their contributions to this study: Iroquois Falls Secondary School and Commando Public School in the Cochrane Iroquois Falls-Black River Matheson Board of Education; Jeunesse Nord, Aileen Wright, and École St-Joseph schools in the Cochrane Iroquois Falls District Roman Catholic Separate School Board. We would also like to acknowledge the valuable assistance of the following individuals in carrying out the study: Earl Park for assistance with interviews and analysis of data on schools with independent learning systems across the province; John Cholvat for assistance with statistical analysis of student achievement and credit completion data; and Kathy MacCrury for assistance with statistical analysis of student and parent survey data.

PART A: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Project Excellence is an innovative system for individualizing instruction at École Secondaire Cochrane High School (E.S.C.H.S.), Cochrane Iroquois Falls-Black River Matheson Board of Education in Cochrane, Ontario. The Project involves all teachers, students, and courses. Teachers function as teaching consultants for particular courses and advisors to groups of 12 to 15 students. The curriculum consists of locally developed 20 unit student learning guides in every subject and course. Rather than attending classes, students go to subject area resource centres to study on their own and consult with teachers as needed. Students organize their own timetables in consultation with a teacher advisor and progress at their own rate. They are not restricted to the number of courses taken in one year, can carry over courses from one school year to the next, and never repeat a course due to failure, because they are in a mastery learning system. Teacher advisors monitor their progress, intervene with assistance when necessary, and contact parents of their advisees on a regular basis.

The circumstances motivating the adoption of Project Excellence at E.S.C.H.S. are encountered in many Ontario secondary schools, particularly those in rural settings and other situations serving relatively small numbers of students. Chief among these are declining enrolment, staff cuts, the resulting difficulty maintaining and providing a full range of courses to small groups of students, and the desire to provide educationally sound methods of satisfying the needs of individual students. These problems have grown more prevalent in the wake of the provincial government's 1985 decision to provide full funding for secondary school education in the separate school system.

The system of education embodied in Project Excellence[1] is unique in scope and flexibility, in terms of providing more program options with few teachers to small groups of students. In addition, the potential educational benefits for students are substantial. Reports of student performance in schools implementing similar individualized systems of education are typically positive and extend to a broader range of students and outcomes than in conventional classroom-based systems of secondary school education. Project Excellence at E.S.C.H.S. places particular emphasis on helping individual students attain certain provincial goals of education that go beyond "the basics", including resourcefulness and self-reliance in learning and living, good work habits, and feelings of self-worth.

---

[1] For convenience purposes we refer to this system of education as "Project Excellence", the label given to it by the staff at E.S.C.H.S. We could have called it "the Trump model", though the system in place at E.S.C.H.S. is a derivative, not an exact replication of the ideas originally proposed by Mr. Trump.

The system on which Project Excellence is based is not new. The Project is modelled on a similar system at Bishop Carroll High School in Calgary, Alberta. The Bishop Carroll version grew out of a North America-wide "model schools" project based on the ideas of L.J. Trump in the early 1970s. Similar experiments were carried out in other secondary schools across Canada, including Ontario (Virgin and Shecter, 1973; Gilbert, 1972). Most of these programs disappeared after a time. A few, such as Bishop Carroll in Calgary, and École Georges-Vanier in Montreal survived and continue as viable alternatives to conventional secondary school organizational patterns. There are, as well, numerous alternative school programs in existence in Ontario (see chapter 15). Few of these programs are open to all students or extend across the entire secondary school curriculum, however.

The implementation of Project Excellence in Cochrane has sparked renewed interest across the province in the Trump or similar models of education. Representatives of no less than 20 schools visited E.S.C.H.S. during the first three years of the Project. Some have considered or are planning to adopt their own versions of Project Excellence. This study should be of significant value both to the school personnel at E.S.C.H.S. and to school personnel interested in learning more about Project Excellence and its possible application in other schools.

Project Excellence has been operating at École Secondaire Cochrane High School since September 1985. During the 1986/87 school year, the Ontario Ministry of Education commissioned a third party evaluation of the effectiveness of Project Excellence on student learning, and of the organizational process used to put the system in place. The case study evaluation reported herein presents the results of that investigation. Data for the study were gathered from November to July of the 1987/88 school year.

1.2. COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL SYSTEM CHARACTERISTICS

Cochrane is a small (pop. 4500) midnorthern Ontario town northeast of Timmins. Mining, lumber, the railways, public agencies, farming, and tourism are the major sources of employment. French and English are the primary languages in common use. The immediate area includes Cochrane, Smooth Rock Falls, Departure Lake, Strickland, Haggart Township, and surrounding unorganized communities. A new Indian reserve called the "New Post Band" was recently established.

The board office is located in Iroquois Falls, about 40 miles from Cochrane. There are eight schools in the board's jurisdiction: two secondary, five elementary, and one school for the trainable retarded. As of September 30, 1987, the secondary enrolment was 1,110, and the elementary enrolment was 1,278. The board's other secondary school is located in Iroquois Falls (Iroquois Falls Secondary School). Two of the elementary schools are located in Cochrane, G.H. Ferguson Public School (JK - 6) and Commando Senior Public School (5 - 8). Both offer French Immersion programs.

The Cochrane Iroquois Falls District Roman Catholic School Board operates two elementary schools (one French, one English) in Cochrane. Until 1985, all Grade 8 students from both school systems completed their secondary schooling at E.S.C.H.S. In 1985 the separate school board opened a French-language high school in Cochrane, beginning with Grade 9. The opening of Jeunesse Nord caused a substantial drop in francophone enrolment at E.S.C.H.S. Jeunesse Nord occupies space leased from the public school board in the same building as E.S.C.H.S. While each school is in a different wing of the building, the library, gymnasium, and cafeteria are shared. Jeunesse Nord operates on a conventional, full-credit, semestered system in regular classroom settings.

École Secondaire Cochrane High School had an enrolment of 485 students (including 85 adult day school students) as of September 1987. There were 31 regular teachers, one Section 10 Special Education teacher, two teacher/vice-principals (one English, one French), and one principal. Support staff included one audio-visual co-ordinator, six secretaries, 11 resource centre assistants, and one audio-visual aide. E.S.C.H.S. is a composite high school, offering academic and vocational courses at all three levels of difficulty (advanced, general, and basic) in both English and French.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

This chapter summarizes the overall structure and research methods of the study, the theoretical framework for the research, and the organization of the report. Additional details concerning the research design and methods are provided in Appendixes B and C, and in relevant sections of the report.

2.1. OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The study was designed to respond to the general and specific research and evaluation objectives and questions listed in the Ministry of Education's Request for Proposal (Appendix A). The overall purpose of the study was to describe and evaluate the characteristics and outcomes of Project Excellence, the process used to put it in place, and its potential for replicability in other settings. The research plan had three major components:

A. **DESCRIPTIVE CASE STUDY**: Description of the features of Project Excellence (goals, resources, organization, roles, etc.), the change process used to put Project Excellence in place, the current status of implementation, and the school and community characteristics.

B. **CASE STUDY EVALUATION**: Evaluation of the characteristics of Project Excellence, its implementation and impact in terms of ministry policies, Project goals, participant attitudes, and student outcomes.

C. **DIFFUSION FEASIBILITY STUDY**: Assessment of the potential for replicating Project Excellence in other secondary schools across the province.

Information for parts A and B of the study consisted mainly of on-site interviews and questionnaires involving local school personnel, students, and parents; analysis of curriculum materials and implementation records (plans, progress reports, minutes, student outcome records, etc.), and observation of the Project in practice. All interviews and questionnaires were carried out in both English and French. Part C involved written face-to-face and telephone surveys of other high schools across the province currently implementing or interested in carrying out individually timetabled systems similar to Project Excellence.

The evaluation consisted of several substudies under each of the major research components. The major research components and substudies, their focus, and sources of data are summarized in Appendix B. Several data gathering instruments contributed to more than one substudy. A list of data gathering instruments and sample sizes appears in Appendix C. Further information about research methods appears where appropriate in the report.

Project Excellence data were gathered in a series of nine visits (two to four days each) to Cochrane between November 1987 and June 1988. Four of the five members of the Edu-Con research team participated in one or another of these visits. The fifth member was primarily responsible for the Diffusion Feasibility surveys in other jurisdictions and schools around the province.

The theoretical framework and an overview of the report are provided in the remainder of this chapter.

2.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework and methods for describing Project Excellence, and for describing and analyzing the change process from an individual and organizational perspective, are drawn from an approach to studying the implementation of educational innovations called the Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM). The components of this approach utilized in our study are as follows:

1. **Stages of Concern.** The feelings and motivations a teacher might have about a change at different points in its implementation. Measured by the Stages of Concern Questionnaire and Open-ended Statements of Concern.

2. **Levels of Use.** How teachers are progressing behaviourly in their use and mastery of a change. Measured by the Levels of Use Interview.

3. **Innovation Configurations.** Variations in innovation use as observed in practice and measured by a Checklist describing teacher implementation of Project Excellence, and interviews based on the Checklist.

4. **Intervention Taxonomy.** A framework for identifying and describing supportive actions taken to facilitate the implementation of educational changes, e.g., developing supportive organizational arrangements, training, consultation, monitoring and evaluation.

Details of the CBAM theory and methods have been widely published. Interested readers are referred to the following key sources: Hall, 1981; Hall and Hord, 1984, 1987; Hall, George, and Rutherford, 1979; Hall, Loucks, Rutherford, and Newlove, 1975; Heck, Stiegelbauer, Hall, and Loucks, 1981; Newlove and Hall, 1976.

A second major component of our theoretical framework concerns the overall process of change. Drawing from the work of researchers such as Michael Fullan (1982), Huberman and Miles (1984), and Paul Berman (1981), our description and analysis of the change process is organized in terms of four stages of change: initiation, development, implementation, and institutionalization.

2.3. ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

This report is not organized according to the research design per se, rather in terms of logical coherence. It made sense, for example, to evaluate teacher and student implementation in conjunction with the descriptions of ideal and current status of implementation, rather than in separate chapters. The remainder of the report is divided into six major parts, as follows:

PART A: INTRODUCTION
PART B: PROJECT EXCELLENCE ORGANIZATION
PART C: ROLES IN PROJECT EXCELLENCE
PART D: CURRICULUM AND STUDENT OUTCOMES
PART E: PARTICIPANT ATTITUDES, OPINIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS
PART F: DIFFUSION FEASIBILITY

Our recommendations to school personnel in Project Excellence and to the Ministry of Education are embedded and italicized where appropriate in the text.

PART B: PROJECT EXCELLENCE ORGANIZATION

CHAPTER 3

OVERVIEW OF PROJECT EXCELLENCE

This chapter presents a general overview of the organization of Project Excellence. Teacher and student roles are described in ideal terms in accordance with Project expectations. Comparisons between expected and actual teacher and student behaviours are presented in chapters 5 and 7. Brief descriptions of special programs, including Special Education, Co-operative Education, Adult Education, Grade 8 Orientation, and programs unique to the Project, conclude the chapter. It is our belief that Project Excellence as designed is unique in its approach to some of the goals of education and principles of OSIS References to OSIS are made where appropriate. Evaluation of how well the Project is accomplishing these goals and principles follows in later sections of the report.

3.1. THE STRUCTURE OF PROJECT EXCELLENCE

3.1.1. Curriculum

All courses are presented to students in the form of written learning guides. A learning guide consists of 20 units. Each unit is expected to take four to six hours to complete in order to satisfy the credit requirement of 110 hours of instruction (OSIS, section 4.4). Every unit contains specific objectives and learning activities. In addition to reading and writing, unit assignments may include use of audio-visual materials, skills exercises, projects, and other practical assignments. At the end of a unit, students are typically required to complete a unit test, which may be written, oral, or practical.

3.1.1. Centres

For each subject there is a resource centre, e.g., the English Centre, the History/Geography Centre, the Art Centre. Course materials (units, textbooks, supplies) for each subject area are stored in the centres. Students check out learning materials and pursue their studies at desks or tables in the centres. Most centres have a resource centre assistant (RCA). The RCA's main job is to check out materials to students, to maintain the unit files, and assist with record keeping. Teachers are available in every centre to supervise and provide individual consultation to students in their areas of expertise.

There are 11 subject area resource centres, a Testing Centre where students go to take unit tests and exams, and a Media Centre, which houses both the library and audio-visual materials. In addition there are two seminar rooms, a special study centre (the Independent Learning Assistance Centre, see below), and a Section 16 classroom. The school has a variety of shops (welding, woodworking, hairdressing, drafting, automotive) and work areas associated with other practical subjects.

Major department centres are staffed by several teachers and remain open all day. Centres and shops staffed by single teachers, e.g., Art, Music, Welding, are open part of the day.

3.1.3. Teacher Role

The teacher role in Project Excellence has two basic components: subject teacher and teacher advisor[2]. More detailed descriptions of the teacher role are provided in chapter 5.

Teacher workday. The teacher's workday is officially apportioned as follows: three hours in a resource centre, one to one and a half hours for curriculum development, one hour for teacher advisor work, 45 minutes for small group instruction and extra-curricular activities, one hour for lunch. The school operates on a two-week schedule, so the actual hours a teacher spends in the centres and in other activities may vary from day to day within that schedule.

Subject teacher. As subject specialists, teachers are responsible for specific courses in one or more departments. This responsibility includes *curriculum development and revision* for each course, *teaching* the course through consultation with individual students and small group seminars, and *marking* student work in the course.

In the resource centres and other work areas (shops, gymnasium), teachers either sit at their desks or circulate, and respond to individual student requests for assistance in the teacher's courses or related subject matter. In addition, teachers may organize periodic seminars for small group learning in specific courses (see item 3.1.4 below). Students are expected to take responsibility for their own learning. The role of the teacher is to help students acquire the knowledge they need in order to learn.

---

[2] Our spelling of "advisor" (vs. "adviser") is consistent with local usage in Project Excellence.

When students complete a unit or test, their work is marked by the teacher responsible for the course, and a "green slip" is sent to the student's teacher advisor indicating completion of the unit. As the official marker for a course, each teacher is responsible for updating and revising that course on a continual basis.

Teacher advisor. Each teacher is the teacher advisor (TA) for a group of 12 to 15 students. Students are assigned to TA groups by language preference (English, French). TA groups include a mix of students from all grade levels who remain with their TA throughout their high school career. The TA helps students to select courses and to develop short and long range plans for course and unit completion. A major function of the TA role is to "teach students how to learn".

The TA monitors each advisee's progress by the number of green slips received, and through bi-weekly interviews. In addition, the TAs meet in teams with the vice-principals every two weeks to review the unit completion progress of students, and to collaborate on strategies for students in difficulty. If a student gets behind in his or her work, the TA may establish "controls", such as a daily work schedule or having the student work in the TA's centre, until the student gets back on track.

TAs are also expected to call each advisee's parents at least once a month to discuss their son or daughter's progress, and to involve them in finding solutions to any problems.

TAs meet with their advisees a minimum of three times a day as follows, 8:45 a.m., 1:00 p.m., and 3:00 p.m. The morning meeting is used to make necessary announcements, hand out green slips, and to check on students' daily plans. The subsequent meetings serve primarily as attendance checks.

The TA role involves teachers in an advising relationship with individual students (OSIS, section 1.5), and in a close partnership with parents (OSIS, section 1.1). They are the front-line guidance persons for their advisees for academic planning and personal counseling (OSIS, section 2.2).

3.1.4. Seminars

Units in many courses are supplemented by teacher-led, small group learning sessions called "seminars". The frequency and purpose of seminars are determined by the teachers responsible for each course. Seminars may be optional or required. Some teachers use them to prepare students for upcoming units. Others use them to elaborate on unit work in progress. Seminar content ranges from lectures and demonstrations, to teacher-led discussions, to student presentations.

3.1.5. Large Group Learning

The transition from homogeneous grade level groups in Grade 8 to the individualized system in Project Excellence, where students from all grade and academic levels mix together, is a major adjustment for students. At the start of each school year, specific hours are scheduled for each resource centre to be fully staffed and open only to Grade 9 students. Grade 9 students are not required, but are strongly encouraged by their TAs to attend. The "Grade 9 Group Learning" program is supposed to help new Grade 9's retain a sense of group identity during the period of adjustment, meet their teachers, and get accustomed to going to the centre for the courses they are working on. It is an attempt to ease the transition from Grade 8 to Grade 9 (OSIS section, 4.1). This schedule is discontinued later in the year as attendance drops and the Grade 9's fit into the system.

The original design for Project Excellence included a schedule for "Large Group Learning" activities. Each department organized about four Large Group instruction assemblies or activities during the year. These activities were supposed to expand student awareness of and motivate student interest in subjects relevant to the department. Most departments recruited external speakers from the community or region for large group presentations, often with a career orientation. The rationale for Large Group Learning activities was unclear, and staff commitment to this component of the Project was low. The program was discontinued as a regularly scheduled feature in year three. While this had no discernible effect on student academic achievement, it did reduce student exposure to knowledge of community resources beyond the school (OSIS, section 1.4).

3.1.6. Student Role and Responsibility

Students in this system are expected to take major responsibility for planning and managing their own learning. With advice from the teacher advisor, the student plans what courses to take, when to work on different courses, and how many units to complete each term and two-week period. They are encouraged to work in the centres for their courses, to work on three or four courses a day, to try to complete four to six units a week, and to consult teachers when they need assistance. Students can begin new courses at any time during the school year, and are allowed to carry over partially completed courses from one year to the next. Responsibility is taken away from students only when they prove themselves unwilling or unable to accept it.

Each student progresses according to his or her mastery of a particular unit. In order to advance to the next unit, the student must successfully complete the previous one. The student's mastery of a subject is determined by his or her knowledge of that subject, not by a class average. A student cannot get credit for a course without successfully completing all the units in that course.

Movement in the school is relatively unrestricted. Apart from the morning TA group meeting, attendance checks, and the half-hour preceding lunch and the end of the day, students can move from centre to centre as they wish. There are two "common breaks", one in the morning and one in the afternoon. These breaks help cut down on the overall traffic in the halls, and also provide a chance for students to socialize with peers.

In terms of its organization and goals, Project Excellence individualizes the learning experiences and evaluation of student performance to a degree beyond that found in conventional secondary schools (OSIS, section 1.5). The structure of the Project also responds directly to some of the more elusive goals of education, such as developing independent responsibility, self discipline, and resourcefulness in learning and living (OSIS, section 1.3).

3.2. SPECIAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

3.2.1. French-Language Education

French-language courses are delivered in the same manner as English-language courses. An equivalent range of French and English courses is offered in the academic subjects. Lack of bilingual teachers has made it difficult for the school to maintain French courses in technical and commercial courses, family studies, and music. The maintenance of French-language courses, however, is not dependent on the Project design so much as on the recruitment and retention of fully bilingual teachers. Courses in French are open also to anglophone students who have graduated from elementary French immersion programs. In an effort to maintain an ambiance for social interaction in French for francophone and immersion students, French TA groups are established and a variety of extra-curricular activities in French are provided within the school.

3.2.2. Guidance

The Guidance Department counsellors have less contact with individual students than in the previous system. TAs consult or refer students to them as the need arises. The Guidance Department still has primary responsibility, however, for career and postsecondary school information advising, for student transcripts, for arranging special education assessments, and for coordinating orientation of new students to the Project. A guidance course based on the ministry's guidance guideline is offered at Grade 11 to interested students. While the frequency of student contact with official guidance counselors has diminished under Project Excellence, the amount of individual academic and personal counselling actually received by students has greatly increased as a result of the teacher advisor system.

3.2.3. Special Education

There are two special education programs in the school, the "Individualized Learning Adjustment Program" for mainstreamed exceptional students and a Section 16 class for students with serious behavioural adjustment problems. The head of basic programs is in charge of regular special education in the school. There is a Section 16 teacher responsible for that program. During the year of our study (1987/88), there were 13 mainstreamed special education students. These students had all been identified through the school's official IPRC (Identification, Placement, and Review Committee) process. Their exceptionalities included gifted, learning disabled, educable retarded, and hearing impaired. Each exceptional student has an Individualized Special Education Plan. These plans are reviewed and modified as needed every three months by a Special Education Committee.

Exceptional pupils are not segregated from other students and take the same courses. Special education student files are marked, so that subject teachers are aware of their identity. When a student completes a unit, the subject teacher submits a progress and assistance report to the head of special education. The head of special education monitors student progress through these reports. She may consult with the teacher, the student's teacher advisor, or provide one-on-one help to the student, if she perceives a problem.

Special education students have certain privileges, such as the right to ask for an oral test, or to use a tape recorder or word processor in the case of writing problems. Teachers have the right to adjust unit assignments and tests to the student's exceptionalities.

The Section 16 class involves a teacher, a social worker, and up to eight students.

Most of these students are from an open custody group home, and are placed directly into the Section 16 class. Other students having serious behavioural adjustment problems may be admitted to Section 16 if they are officially identified as exceptional students in an IPRC meeting. All Section 16 students are confined to the class initially. If they improve academically and behaviourally, they are allowed to work in the centres for gradually increasing periods of time.

Such students are encouraged to do the same courses as others in the school. The students have access to individualized help from the Section 16 teacher, and are permitted to consult subject teachers when the latter send notes about their work. According to the Section 16 teacher, this has removed the "Mickey Mouse" reputation of the program, and has helped the students' self-esteem when they begin succeeding.

In the fall of 1986 the school was involved in a ministry and board evaluation through a Co-operative Evaluation and Development of School Systems Project (CEDSS) (see chapter 4). The evaluation report expressed concern regarding the degree of specialized programming provided to exceptional students. We did not specifically evaluate the effectiveness of special education programs in Project Excellence. There were a few special education students, however, in our student and parent interview samples. Those interviewed spoke positively about the Project. Several teachers said they had modified assignments and tests for special education students. In terms of evaluating special education under Project Excellence, we can only say that our findings *do not* support those of the prior CEDSS report.

3.2.4. Co-operative Education

Co-operative Education began during the second year of the Project (see Organizational History, chapter 4). A technical department teacher was relieved of teacher advisor obligations and appointed co-ordinator for co-operative education. The program grew rapidly. During the 1987/88 school year 45 students were enrolled in co-operative education courses. Three other teachers were assigned part-time responsibility for supervising students taking co-operative education courses in their subject areas (commercial, building construction, family studies). In the spring of 1988, a francophone teacher was appointed to co-ordinate work placements for students desiring to work in French.

The program operates similarly to co-operative education programs in other schools.

Students enter the program in the fall or late winter. All work placements relate to a course in the school. During the 1987/88 school year, students were placed in a variety of positions, e.g., mechanics, welders, lab technicians, store clerks, teacher's aides, nursing assistants, and cooks. Before going out on their placements, co-operative education students attend weekly seminars on job search skills (applications, interviews, resume writing, etc.) presented by the program co-ordinator.

We did not attempt to evaluate the co-operative education program in terms of all the requirements set forth for those programs in OSIS (section, 5.11). The rapid growth of this program, however, suggests that it is satisfying a definite need among non-university bound students at E.S.C.H.S. From our conversations with school personnel and students, it seems that the flexibility inherent in Project Excellence is particularly suited to the implementation of co-operative education. Because they do not have regular classes to attend, students experience few conflicts between work schedules and course work. The only complications arise in conjunction with required seminars in other subjects. Co-operative education has brought a new dimension of relevance to the curriculum at E.S.C.H.S. This impact is not unique to Project Excellence.

3.2.5. Adult Education

Project Excellence is also a propitious context for adult education. The school began promoting adult education in earnest during the second year of the Project, as a way of maintaining enrolment and staff (see chapter 4). One of the technical teachers was released from teacher advisor obligations and appointed co-ordinator for adult education. A study space for adult day school students was created in the technical department offices.

Adult students take the same courses as regular students. They go to the centres to check out units for their courses, and their work is marked by the teachers responsible for those courses. The main differences are that they are not obliged to work at school and they do not have to report to a teacher advisor.

In the spring of 1988, a decision was made to open the school one evening a week for adult students.

3.2.6. Independent Learning Assistance Centre (Room 210)

During the second year of the Project, the staff began experimenting with special programs for students who were not making satisfactory progress (see chapter 4). The

Independent Learning Assistance Centre (colloquially referred to as "Room 210") was inaugurated in the fall of 1987. Room 210 is designed to help students who have difficulty concentrating and organizing their studying. Admission to Room 210 is voluntary, and only upon student request. These are students who want to succeed, but who need some extra help learning how to work in Project Excellence.

Room 210 is open three hours a day, and is staffed by three teachers. Each teacher contributes an hour of his/her resource centre time to the program. Students must establish a specific plan for the courses and units they intend to work on. The teachers monitor their performance closely and provide individualized assistance as needed.

Room 210 is not a detention centre for students who are unmotivated, disruptive, truant, and unresponsive to the normal efforts of TAs, teachers, and/or parents to get them on track. New ways of dealing with such students were introduced during year three of the Project. A collaborative approach to dealing with problem students occurs in bi-weekly unit review meetings between the vice-principals and teams of TAs. The principal, vice-principals, and adult education co-ordinator may be assigned as ad hoc TAs for a few students in this category. After repeated warnings, uncooperative students may be temporarily suspended.

3.2.7. Transfer Students

The Cochrane Iroquois Falls board allows students at E.S.C.H.S. to opt out of Project Excellence and complete their high school education at Iroquois Falls Secondary School. Bus transportation is provided for these students. A "late taxi" service is also available to enable them to consult teachers and participate in after school activities. Details concerning the frequency, motives, and adjustment of transfer students are provided in chapter 11.

3.2.8. Grade 8 Orientation and Articulation

Students from the senior elementary public school (Commando) and the English Catholic elementary school (Aileen Wright) feed into E.S.C.H.S. Only three Grade 8 students from the French Catholic elementary school were scheduled to go to E.S.C.H.S. in the fall of 1988 (41 were planning to go to Jeunesse Nord). The remaining comments pertain mainly to the two English schools.

The most significant features of the relationship between the two main feeder schools and E.S.C.H.S. are: the orientation programs and staff sharing.

The Orientation Program. In the 1985-86 school year, the orientation program for Aileen Wright and Commando school students was one half-day in length. The teachers brought the students to E.S.C.H.S.; they had a tour of the school, and that was all. In the spring of 1986, the Project Excellence Parent Advisory Committee recommended making the program much longer. As a result, the June orientation programs in 1986-87 and 1987-88 have been four days in length, Monday through Thursday.

The program begins in March when parents (and students) are invited to tour the school and talk with teachers. Subsequently, the feeder school teachers go over the E.S.C.H.S. calendar with Grade 8 students and help them in course selection. Feeder schools forward the completed forms to E.S.C.H.S., where the Guidance Department reviews the applications. The new students are assigned to existing teacher advisor groups prior to the four-day orientation visit in June. No more than four and no fewer than two Grade 8 graduates are allocated to a TA group. The week before the visit, a group of E.S.C.H.S. teachers visits the schools to explain Project Excellence.

On day one of the four-day orientation program, the Grade 8 graduates are met by one or two students from their TA group. They are taken to their group, introduced to the other students, and participate in a normal morning TA group session. A school assembly follows and then a tour of the school in small groups. Later in the morning all new students report to their teacher advisor, where they are given a study package and assigned to a work area. The package contains units which are typical of regular Project Excellence courses, but easy enough that the new students should manage them successfully. Each student is expected to complete three or four units during the four days of the program. They also attend seminars and audio-visual presentations. They have access to assistance from teachers and their progress is monitored by their TA. Completed units are marked and recorded as work in progress for when they return in the fall. Parents are invited to visit the school on the morning of the final orientation day. The orientation program concludes with an all-school activity program under the direction of the Student Council, and an assembly with the school administration.

The program is regarded as quite successful by all involved. Most of the Grade 9 students interviewed for our study had positive comments about the experience.

Staff intervisitation and sharing. Part of the E.S.C.H.S. principal's stated policy is to "be sure there is understanding between the feeder schools and E.S.C.H.S." Accordingly, the staffs of feeder schools are encouraged to visit E.S.C.H.S. at any time.

An active program of "staff-sharing" has been implemented between Commando Public School and E.S.C.H.S. The staff-sharing with Commando School is of two types:

(a) A staff member goes to Commando School on a regular basis to teach some subject in the elementary school, such as instrumental music. In exchange, teachers from Commando go to E.S.C.H.S. to assist in resource centres while music is being taught at Commando. This allows the teachers from Commando to become well-acquainted with the program at E.S.C.H.S.

(b) The other type of "staff-sharing" provides the opportunity for groups of feeder school students to go to E.S.C.H.S. to study certain topics not available at the elementary school. There are usually eight students in a group, and they go once a week for four weeks. This type of program has been arranged in Music, Physical Education, Drafting, Auto, Building Trades, Welding, and Family Studies.

This concludes our overview of Project Excellence. The remaining chapters of the report describe and evaluate the implementation process, participant roles, student outcomes, structural arrangements, and the potential for disseminating the Project to other settings.

CHAPTER 4

ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This section of the study describes the organizational process used to mobilize, implement, and continue Project Excellence. The description covers six periods of the change process as follows:

B.1 INITIATION (circumstances culminating in board decision to adopt the Project in January 1985)

B.2 DEVELOPMENT (initial preparations for Project implementation, February 1985 to August 1985)

B.3 IMPLEMENTATION: YEAR 1 (activities and events associated with ongoing development and beginning implementation during the first school year, August 1985 to July 1986)

B.4 IMPLEMENTATION: YEAR 2 (activities and events occuring during second year of Project implementation)

B.5 IMPLEMENTATION: YEAR 3 (activities and events occuring during third year of Project implementation)

B.6 CONTINUATION (activities and circumstances influencing potential for institutionalization of the Project)

The chapter begins with the initiation stage. The change process is then examined across the development stage and the first three years of Project implementation from four perspectives: (1) project management; (2) implementation assistance; (3) implementation evaluation; and (4) critical issues. The historical description is followed by our evaluation of the organizational process supporting Project implementation, in terms of teachers' Stages of Concern, Levels of Use, and potential for continuation. Recommendations to other schools concerning the implementation process appear in the concluding chapter (chapter 15) of this report.

The findings for this part of the study are drawn mainly from implementation documents (e.g., minutes of department head meetings, reports to the board, planning documents), and from interviews with school administrators, central office officials, and a sample of teachers (15) and department heads (7).

4.2 INITIATION

The motives for adopting Project Excellence were outlined in chapter 1. The administration and teachers at E.S.C.H.S. were having a difficult time maintaining courses due to declining enrolment, staff cuts, and a series of provincial policy changes, such as full funding for secondary school education in the separate school system. Past "solutions" such as cutting or combining low enrolment courses were regarded as educationally unsound and unfair to the majority of students. The administration and teachers were looking for alternatives.

In this context of "readiness for change", a new principal took charge in the fall of 1984. The Principal was aware of Bishop Carroll High School in Calgary, which had been operating on a school-wide individualized study program for a dozen years.

In early January 1985, the principals of the board's two secondary schools, the Superintendent of Schools, and one trustee went to visit Bishop Carroll. Impressed with what they saw and learned, the E.S.C.H.S. Principal and Superintendent decided to propose that the school implement the Bishop Carroll system on a trial basis, beginning with the English and mathematics programs in the fall.

The following week, the Principal discussed the proposal with department heads. All agreed to give the system a try, but there was disagreement whether to begin with English and mathematics or with the entire school program. Seven heads voted to start with English and mathematics; six voted for school-wide implementation.

On Friday of the same week, the Principal spent a day with the rest of the staff explaining the system and the proposal. The teachers wanted a say in whether to begin with limited or full-scale implementation. They met alone the following Monday to vote on the matter. The vote was 95% in favor of full-scale implementation to begin in September 1985.

Despite concerns about the short timeline, the Superintendent of Schools presented a motion to the board that very night to change the entire school over to the new system. The board unanimously approved the project for five years.

The circumstances leading up to the official decision to adopt Project Excellence included the following key elements: an acute problem of course maintenance and quality in a context of declining enrolment, an active search for solutions to the problem, administrative succession at the school and board levels, awareness of a solution which had proven feasible and educationally effective in other schools, full commitment from the school and central administration, unanimous support from the board, and nearly unanimous agreement on the part of teachers. Without these readiness conditions it is difficult to imagine this project having been approved and implemented in such short order.

Except for trustees, there was no communication with parents and the community until after the decision had been made.

4.3. PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Table 4-1 charts the basic management structures set up to facilitate Project decision-making and planning, monitoring of implementation progress and concerns, problem identification and solution finding. Some have remained intact since the beginning. Others were responses to Project needs at different stages.

During the development phase of the Project, a system committee consisting of the Superintendent of Schools, the principals of both secondary schools, and major department heads was set up to monitor and discuss the changes underway at E.S.C.H.S. and the board's other secondary school.[3] Otherwise, there was no formal planning structure at the school system level.

The only special mechanism set up at the board level was a trustee liaison committee. At the Principal's request, three local trustees met with him on a bi-weekly basis from the beginning of the Project. This kept the Board in touch with progress in the school and kept the Principal in touch with community opinion.

Priority was given to short-term strategic planning at the school and department levels. The Principal described the overall approach. "We had the model. We had the vision. Our job was to realize the vision without detracting from it."

The basic management structure for planning, problem solving, and monitoring implementation was simple. The Principal and vice-principals met as a team almost daily before or after school to keep on top of what was happening through the first year of Project implementation. The frequency of their meetings diminished in years two and three, as implementation became more routine. School planning, policy making, and problem solving was ongoing under the Principal's leadership at weekly or bi-weekly department head meetings. Full staff meetings were used more for information giving and discussion than for

---

[3] Both schools were preparing for the establishment of French-language high schools by the separate school board in their buildings. I.F.S.S. was also introducing semestering in 1985/86.

Table 4-1

Implementation Management Structures

DEVELOPMENT (JA'85-SE'85)	YEAR ONE (1985/86)	YEAR TWO (1986/87)	YEAR THREE (1987/88)
BOARD	**BOARD**	**BOARD**	**BOARD**
Routine board meetings	Routine board meetings	Routine board meetings	Routine board meetings
Regular communication with director of education	Routine communication with director of education	Routine communication with director of education	Routine communication with director of education
Trustee liaison committee	Trustee liaison committee	Trustee liaison committee	Trustee liaison committee
Progress reports to board	Progress reports to board		
System admin. committee			
SCHOOL	**SCHOOL**	**SCHOOL**	**SCHOOL**
Daily Principal/VP meetings	Daily Principal/VP meetings	Regular Principal/VP meetings	Irregular Principal/VP meetings
Weekly dept. heads meetings	Weekly dept. heads meetings	Weekly dept. heads meetings	Weekly dept. heads meetings
Monthly staff meetings	Monthly staff meetings	Monthly staff meetings	Monthly staff meetings
		Goal setting and staff evaluation procedure	Goal setting and staff evaluation procedure
		Monthly Project Renewal Meetings (Nov-June)	
DEPARTMENT	**DEPARTMENT**	**DEPARTMENT**	**DEPARTMENT**
Regular department meetings	Bi-weekly Project Effectiveness Meetings	Bi-weekly Project Effectiveness Meetings (Sept-Oct)	Monthly department meetings
		Irregular department meetings (Nov-June)	
COMMUNITY	**COMMUNITY**	**COMMUNITY**	**COMMUNITY**
	Parent Advisory Committee	Parent Advisory Committee	Parent Advisory Committee
			Graduate Parent Advisory Committee
			Native Parent Advisory Committee

decision-making as such. The routine channel for staff input was through department meetings.

During the development phase, the departments met as often as necessary to organize curriculum work and plan the resource centres. A major innovation the first year was the scheduling of half-day bi-weekly "Project Effectiveness" meetings for every department. Single teacher departments met as a group with one of the administrators. The departments used this time for a wide variety of purposes, such as making decisions about resource centre organization, record keeping and grading, seminars, curriculum planning, and curriculum evaluation.

There were a number of changes in the management structure for implementation during year two. A new approach to ongoing problem identification and problem solving replaced the bi-weekly department Project Effectiveness Meetings. This came about following a special Professional Development Day in the fall. The staff was broken down into inter-departmental groups led by different heads. Each group identified "the three greatest problems" for unit production and improving the system. Consensus was then obtained with the staff as a whole on "the three greatest problems for the school". They met again in groups to generate solutions for those three problems. Suggested solutions were presented at a staff meeting the following week.

A decision was then taken to stop the individual department Project Effectiveness Meetings (these meetings interfered with student access to the centres) and to proceed with monthly Project Renewal Meetings, using the small group inter-departmental problem solving approach. Full-or half-day Project Renewal Meetings were scheduled throughout the second year of implementation, mostly on Professional Development Days. These meetings focussed on curriculum improvement and on finding strategies to improve the role of teacher advisors. Departments were expected to reinstate regular department meetings as needed. The Project Renewal meetings were discontinued after year two of implementation. Project management from this point on proceeded under the normal structure of administrative team, department head meetings, department meetings, and staff meetings.

An externally imposed change in Project management occurred during the second year of implementation. The senior administration asked the principal and staff to set formal goals that year, and directed the principal to develop and implement a procedure for teacher evaluation. The principal and heads adopted a teacher supervision procedure which focussed on the four major dimensions of a teacher's role in Project Excellence: teacher,

teacher advisor, curriculum developer, and colleague.

Provisions for ongoing consultation and input from parents about the Project were introduced during the first year of implementation. The Principal established a Parent Advisory Committee, and began meeting with them on an intermittent basis to get feedback and advice, and to share information about what was happening in the school. During year three, two additional advisory committees were created. One was an ad hoc committee to help plan a survey of graduates of Project Excellence. The other was a standing committee of Native parents to advise the school on matters related to the education of Native students.

4.4. IMPLEMENTATION ASSISTANCE

4.4.1. Assistance Overview

Table 4-2 summarizes the major types and sources of assistance provided to teachers by or through the administration during the development period and the first three years of Project Excellence. Staff development was a major area of staff activity during the development stage and first two years of implementation. During this beginning phase, the administration and staff looked outward for help from Bishop Carroll and other schools with individualized systems, and inward for help from each other. In year two they began seeking additional outside expertise in curriculum and counselling skills.

In the third year, staff development activity dropped off. Implementation had become routine by this point, and the attention of the administration and teachers turned to ways to refine and improve what they were doing. They had some specific needs in mind, particularly curriculum improvement, but were having difficulty finding consultants with expertise in this approach to learning. A related frustration was the fact that conventional professional development opportunities for teachers are felt to have little relevance to their roles as teachers and teacher advisors in Project Excellence. The third year also saw an increase in the number of Native students in the school, resulting in some staff development on ways to work with these students.

The help received from schools with individualized programs was very useful during the development phase and first year of implementation. There were three trips to Bishop Carroll and one to École Georges-Vanier in Quebec during that period, involving the Principal, both vice-principals, and several major department heads. For each visit, the staff developed specific questions for the visitors to investigate. Upon return, the visitors gave reports, and distributed written descriptions, sample curriculum materials, forms, and photos. The department heads were encouraged to telephone their peers at Bishop Carroll to clarify any questions they might have about departmental organization.

In addition, the board financed an in-service and consultation visit by representatives from Bishop Carroll during the development phase. Another Bishop Carroll team came mid-way during the first year to observe and provide formative feedback on the status of implementation. The help from Bishop Carroll was useful from the standpoint of developing a vision of the new system, getting the basic roles and procedures in place, providing moral support, and giving assurance that the school was making progress and that the problems encountered were normal and temporary. By the end of year one, Bishop Carroll staff no longer had much to offer beyond moral support. Project Excellence was modelled after Bishop Carroll, but quickly adapted to the context and needs of E.S.C.H.S.

Staff development during the development phase and first two years of implementation had three main focuses: (1) understanding the system; (2) curriculum development and revision; and (3) the teacher advisor role. The contacts, reports, and materials from Bishop Carroll and Georges-Vanier were the initial basis for understanding the proposed system.

4.4.2. Curriculum Assistance

The initial thrust of curriculum assistance was to clarify the format for units and courses. Sample units from Bishop Carroll, Georges-Vanier, and ministry consultants were the initial sources of ideas for unit development. Sample French materials for technical studies courses were obtained from a vocational school in Quebec.

Teachers were given extra time and clerical assistance to develop the initial learning guides. The school conference budget was used to hire supply teachers to free up teacher time for curriculum writing during the development phase. For the first two years of implementation, the Principal scheduled free time into professional development days for teachers to work on curriculum and record keeping. This was in addition to the curriculum development time scheduled into the teacher's work day.

Student assistants to help type and duplicate the initial learning guides were hired under the ministry's Challenge '85 program. Over 300 twenty-unit courses had to be written, typed, and duplicated en masse. A secretarial pool of 10 persons was set up in the school cafeteria the summer before the Project got underway. Since September 1985, unit typing and duplication has been carried out by the school secretaries.

Table 4-2

Implementation Assistance to Teachers and the Administration

DEVELOPMENT (JA'85-SE'85)	YEAR ONE (1985/86)	YEAR TWO (1986/87)	YEAR THREE (1987/88)
CONSULTATION	**CONSULTATION**	**CONSULTATION**	**CONSULTATION**
Three model school visits to Calgary and Quebec. Principal, VPs, dept. heads, trustees. Staff prepare questions. Visitors provide reports. Bishop Carroll team visits E.S.C.H.S. One hour consultation w/ each dept. Dept. heads contact Bishop Carroll heads as needed. Principal consults with dept. heads re all issues and concerns at weekly meetings. Ministry of Education consultants offer/provide curriculum assistance in specific subject areas	Bishop Carroll team comes to observe and give feedback on implementation status and concerns. Principal consults with dept. heads re all issues and concerns at weekly meetings. Teachers consult with each other at bi-weekly Project Effectiveness meetings. Informal teacher sharing. Principal meets with each TA re student progress. Principal consults with Bishop Carroll VP re Grade 9 student adjustment. Principal consults Parent Advisory Committee.	Two department heads visit Bishop Carroll. Principal consults with dept. heads re all issues and concerns at weekly meetings. Project Renewal Meetings used as forum for unit sharing and teacher discussion of TA role concerns. Informal teacher sharing. Principal meets with each TA re student progress. Unit Length Review Committee set up to advise teachers on need and ways to reduce unit length. Principal consults Parent Advisory Committee.	Principal consults with dept. heads re all issues and concerns at weekly meetings. Informal teacher sharing. VP/TA team meetings to review student progress. Principal seeks expertise and advice re special needs of Native students. Principal consults Parent Advisory Committee(s).
IN-SERVICE	**IN-SERVICE**	**IN-SERVICE**	**IN-SERVICE**
Principal explains Bishop Carroll system to staff. Visitors to model schools bring descriptions, sample units, forms, and photos to teachers. Principal prepares Teacher Handbook. Staff meetings to clarify teacher advisor role. Bishop Carroll team gives in-service on TA role.	PD day discussion of TA role. Administration gives written suggestions to TAs re student responsibility, parent involvment, and student interaction. Principal organizes PD day "sharing of forms" display	Social workers in-service TAs on counseling and interviewing skills. Administration gives written suggestions to teachers re alternative learning modes. Administration gives written suggestions to TAs re student study habits. Curriculum consultant in-service on "concept development".	Principal presents a motivational film on PD day Native education consultant does information session on PD day. Principal and some staff attend Native Awareness Seminar at Native Friendship Centre.

The Principal acquired some special resources during the initial development phase. The major purchase was a high speed copier, made possible through a Northern Development Grant from the provincial government. A machine of this sort is an absolute necessity for the initiation and maintenance of this system of education, due to the constant duplication requirements of unit production, replacement, and revision.

Once the initial courses were developed, the focus of curriculum assistance shifted to curriculum revision and refinements based on the response of students. Emphasis was placed on reducing unit length, and on building alternative learning modes into the units. Suggestions for unit reduction were distributed by the administration. When this failed to have the desired effect, administrative edicts to reduce content were issued.

The initial courses relied heavily on reading and writing modes of learning. With the assistance of a Northern Development Grant from the provincial government at the end of year one, the Principal allocated additional funds to the departments for audio-visual materials, such as commercially produced video-tapes and software. Teachers were encouraged to use the school's audio-visual services to video-tape lectures and seminars as a supplement or alternative to written assignments. During year two the administration and heads also compiled a list of related "activities" in each subject area. Teachers were encouraged to give students credit towards completion of units for participation in related extra-curricular activities.

The focus of curriculum assistance shifted to curriculum quality and effectiveness during year two of implementation. A full day was set aside for teachers in small cross-departmental groups to share their "best" and "worst" units with each other. A consultant on concept development gave a workshop in the spring.

4.4.3. TA Role Assistance

The third major focus of staff development was the teacher advisor role. During the development phase the Principal devoted several staff meetings to discussion and clarification of the TA role. Visitors from Bishop Carroll conducted an in-service session on the TA role. The principal prepared a teacher handbook which clarified expectations for teachers in this and their subject teacher roles. Towards the end of the school year, teachers got a chance to practice their new role. Students were assigned to TAs by the administration and guidance. Teachers helped their TA group students fill out course option sheets for the coming year. They also met with their TA students as part of Grade 8 orientation.

Despite these efforts, many teachers said they got no real training for the role. Several added that talk about the TA role meant little to them at the time, because they were preoccupied writing curriculum and knew so little about implementing the role.

During year one, further opportunities for discussion and sharing about the TA role were provided in staff meetings and professional development days. As teacher advisors, teachers were initially concerned about how to motivate and help students adjust to the system, establishing new kinds of teacher-student relationships, and coming to terms with the guidance functions.

The Principal offered some assistance. A fall PD Day session was devoted to talking about the TA role. Some department heads prepared a "study skills handout" for TAs and students. The Principal declared "refining the TA role" a school priority during the winter term. He prepared written suggestions to assist teachers in helping students handle responsibility, in communicating with parents, and in team building within their TA groups. At a subsequent PD day, the administration organized a "sharing of forms" display of record keeping procedures developed by TAs. Other than written materials and access to consultative assistance from the guidance department, the TAs got no organized assistance in academic and career counselling.

The teachers interviewed said that it was not until well into the first year that they realized how unprepared they were for the TA role, and that they understood what kind of help they needed. During year two a social worker was brought in to teach interviewing and counselling skills to TAs. Many teachers said that this was the most useful assistance provided for the TA role. Organized opportunities for staff discussion about the TA role continued in Project Renewal meetings that year.

For the first two years, the Principal met periodically with each TA to review the progress of their TA students, and to offer advice on special cases. In order to broaden the base of support, he facilitated the creation of VP/TA teams in year three. Each vice-principal was assigned two groups of TAs. Each team met every other week to review student progress and to collaborate on ways to help unmotivated students or students in difficulty. Other than setting up this ongoing support mechanism, there was no further special assistance for the TA role during year three.

4.4.4. In-house versus External Assistance

Five themes typified our discussions with teachers about the kinds of assistance received, and what was most useful. The first was that visits to model schools and ready access to consultative assistance were very important in the development and early stages of implementation.

Second was the underlying feeling that apart from the initial support from Bishop Carroll, the administration and staff accomplished the change together on their own. Teachers helped each other with ideas, forms, and materials in a very collegial way. The administration facilitated this collegial support by creating organized opportunities for within and across department sharing and problem solving in department head meetings, department Project Effectiveness meetings, school-wide Project Renewal meetings, and the VP/TA team meetings.

Thirdly, the dependence on in-house assistance, i.e., teachers and the administration learning together and teaching each other how to implement the system, was partly due to lack of awareness of sources of expertise within the province in this approach to education. The reliance on local expertise likely contributed to the high level of teacher commitment and involvement in implementation of the Project.

The fourth theme was that preparation for the TA role was essential, but that teachers did not fully comprehend the role and their needs for assistance with such things as interviewing, motivating and helping students, consulting with parents, and academic advising, until they actually began practicing the role.

The final theme was that the capacity of the staff to generate new ideas for improvement and solutions for seemingly intractable problems began to wane after about two years. The need for assistance in getting the system in place began to be displaced by a search for outside ideas on how to improve the system.

4.5. IMPLEMENTATION EVALUATION

4.5.1. In-house Evaluation

The school administration's overall approach to implementation has been to identify, clarify, and verify problems and concerns, not to avoid them. As a result, ongoing formative evaluation has been built in to the Project from the start. Table 4-3 outlines the key Project evaluation events and ongoing evaluation processes used to monitor the implementation process and to assess its impact on students, the staff, and parents.

As with implementation assistance, the most meaningful evaluation during the initial two years was in-house. Most of the basic implementation management structures (see

Table 4-3

Implementation Evaluation

DEVELOPMENT (JA'85-SE'85)	YEAR ONE (1985/86)	YEAR TWO (1986/87)	YEAR THREE (1987/88)
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION	MINISTRY OF EDUCATION	MINISTRY OF EDUCATION	MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
Fact finding visit by Asst. Deputy Minister.	Written progress report from the Principal.	CEDSS Evaluation.	Edu-Con evaluation data collection.
Two visits by ministry regional monitoring team.			
BOARD	BOARD	BOARD	BOARD
Informal monitoring by supervisory officers.	Informal monitoring by supervisory officers.	Informal monitoring by supervisory officers.	Informal monitoring by supervisory officers.
Oral and written progress reports from the Principal.	Written progress reports from the Principal.	(CEDSS Evaluation)	(Edu-Con Evaluation)
Principal/trustee liaison committee.	Principal/trustee liaison committee.	Principal/trustee liaison committee	Principal/trustee liaison committee
	Teacher interviews by Director of Education and Superintendent to get teacher concerns feedback.	Teacher evaluation procedure developed	Teacher evaluation procedure in place
SCHOOL	SCHOOL	SCHOOL	SCHOOL
Department head meeting progress reports.	Department head meeting problem clarification and solving.	Department head meeting problem clarification and solving.	Department head meeting problem clarification and solving.
Principal meetings with individual dept. heads.	Department-level Project Effectiveness meetings.	School-level Project Renewal meetings.	(Edu-Con evaluation)
Bishop Carroll team visit and feedback on progress.	Principal/TA meetings re student progress.	Principal/TA meetings re student progress.	Graduate student survey.
	Bishop Carroll team visit and feedback on progress.	Unit Length Review Committee.	VP/TA team meetings.
	Year end dept. head Project Evaluation meeting.		

"Project Management", above) served the simultaneous functions of implementation planning, assistance, *and* evaluation. The staff investigated ongoing implementation problems in department head meetings, Project Effectiveness, and Project Renewal meetings. The chief ones were curriculum unit length and student progress (see "Curriculum revision: unit length",and "Student Progress", below). Monitoring of student progress in Project Excellence has been facilitated by the TA system and by the standardization of procedures for recording, reporting, and talking about student progress across the curriculum. At any time, the administration can look at the TA records for any student and see exactly how well they are keeping up the pace of unit completion for the term or year in all their courses. During the first two years, the Principal met with each TA three or four times a year to review student progress. This function was turned over to the vice- principals and teams of TAs during year three of implementation (see "Implementation Assistance", above). The Principal continued to meet with individual TAs to check out specific concerns, such as the progress of Native students, and whether students were balancing their workload between academic and practical courses.

During year three of implementation, the administration turned its attention to Project outcomes for graduating students. With the assistance of an ad hoc committee of parents of students who graduated after one or two years in the Project, the administration sent a survey to former students attending colleges or universities. The survey asked for feedback on their preparation for postsecondary school education, and for suggestions for improvement in specific subject areas. Plans to repeat the survey with future graduates in subsequent years were underway.

4.5.2. External Evaluations

The school has not relied solely on in-house monitoring and evaluation of implementation progress and concerns. External evaluation assistance has been sought throughout the Project history. During the development phase and first year of implementation, the visits from Bishop Carroll were an important source of formative feedback on all aspects of the Project.

The Director of Education and Superintendent of Schools monitored the implementation process largely through regular communication with the Principal and "drop-in" visits. At the end of the first year, they spent a day interviewing teachers about their opinions and concerns, and submitted a report recommending attention to discipline, improved communication between staff and the administration, the need for teacher advisor in-service, and improved relations with parents.

During the second year of implementation (1985/86), the school took part in a Ministry of Education CEDSS review. This review was system-wide. It included Project Excellence, but encompassed other schools, as well. The evaluation team spent a couple of days at E.S.C.H.S. interviewing teachers, students, and parents. Immediate feedback noted such concerns as teachers' feelings of isolation from colleagues in other schools and the desire for contact with curriculum consultants. The official report was critical of the school's provisions for exceptional students and students in basic courses, oral language development in French, school spirit and extra-curricular activities, and student interaction in group learning situations. Most of these concerns were already a focus of attention in the school.

Following the ministry-assisted evaluation, a more comprehensive third-party evaluation of Project Excellence was commissioned, the results of which are reported in this study.

The standing and ad hoc parent advisory committees have provided an additional source of "external" evaluation feedback to the administration on implementation progress and concerns from the perspective of parents and students. In addition, special evenings were organized during the first two years for parents to meet in groups with their son or daughter's teacher advisor to air and share their concerns about student progress and the system.

The local board has relied mainly on the Director of Education's informal monitoring of Project events and issues, periodic oral or written reports from the Principal or Director, and the Principal's trustee liaison committee. Public opinion expressed directly to trustees and through the local media has provided another source of feedback to the board.

4.6. CRITICAL CONCERNS IN PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

This section summarizes the critical concerns dealt with by the administration and teachers in Project Excellence during the development phase and first three years of implementation. These are summarized in table 4-4 under the following headings:

(a) curriculum

(b) student progress

(c) student adjustment

(d) student conduct

(e) school climate

(f) enrolment and staffing

(g) parent involvement

(h) facilities

4.6.1. Curriculum

Curriculum concerns have evolved over the history of Project Excellence from initial curriculum development and revision, with a focus on unit length and clarity, to interest in increasing the flexibility and variability of learning processes employed, and to improving overall course quality. The use of small group learning activities called seminars has been a continuing issue.

Curriculum Development. The primary preoccupation of teachers during the development phase from January to August 1985 was preparing units. The school goal was to have ten units on the shelves in all courses by September. From September to January teachers were to finish the remaining 10 units, while "field testing" those already developed. During the second half of the 1985/86 school year, the plan was to revise the first 10 units and field test the others. Revision of units 10 to 20 was projected for the fall of 1986. Revision thereafter would be ongoing.

Responsibility for curriculum development was decentralized to the departments. Each department decided who would handle which courses. Most courses were prepared by individual teachers. A couple of departments had different teachers write portions of each course, depending on their particular areas of expertise.

Of the teachers interviewed, most prepared units straight through from February to September ("..every spare minute was writing units"; "writing units non-stop at school, at home, all places"). Apart from finishing on time, the teachers were mainly concerned about the format of the learning guides. There was considerable uncertainty about such

Table 4-4

Critical Concerns in Project Development and Implementation

DEVELOPMENT (JA'85-SE'85)	YEAR ONE (1985/86)	YEAR TWO (1986/87)	YEAR THREE (1987/88)
Curriculum	Curriculum	Curriculum	Curriculum
Initial unit development Initial unit production	Initial unit development Initial unit revision Unit length reduction Alternative learning modes	Unit revision Unit length reduction Alternative learning modes	Ongoing unit revision Alternative learning modes Seminar frequency/function Curriculum quality
Student Progress	Student Progress	Student Progress	Student Progress
(Not applicable)	Unit completion progress Student timetabling Mathematics Marking and record keeping	Unit completion progress Student timetabling Mathematics French immersion	Unit completion progress Student timetabling Mathematics French immersion
Student Adjustment	Student Adjustment	Student Adjustment	Student Adjustment
All student orientation TA group formation Grade 8 orientation	Grade 8 orientation Grade 9 adjustment Responsibility, time management, study skills Contacts with subject teachers	Grade 9 adjustment Helping non-productive students Contacts with subject teachers	Helping non-productive students Native students
Student Conduct	Student Conduct	Student Conduct	Student Conduct
(not applicable)	Respect for authority Breaks Movement and noise	Breaks Movement and noise	Movement and noise Closing of centres Camping out
School Climate	School Climate	School Climate	School Climate
(not applicable)	Group interaction School spirit Francophone identity	School spirit Extra-curricular participation	(no critical issues)
Enrolment, Staffing, and Program	Enrolment, Staffing, and Program	Enrolment, Staffing, and Program	Enrolment, Staffing, and Program
Loss of francophone pupils Loss of francophone staff Hiring of RCAs Secretary role definition	Loss of francophone pupils Loss of francophone staff Appointment of adult ed and co-op ed coordinators	Continuing enrolment loss Student transfers to IFSS Establish co-op ed program Growth of adult ed program	Continuing enrolment loss Co-op ed program expansion 30 Native pupils register Teacher turnover
Parent Involvement	Parent Involvement	Parent Involvement	Parent Involvement
Gaining parent support Parent understanding of the system	Controversy among parents Parent input to decisions Parent concerns about student progress, access to help, and interaction Parent understanding of teacher/TA roles Helping parents help students	Continued controversy Parent concerns about mathematics and French Helping parents help students	Parent concerns about mathematics and French Parent understanding of the system Renewal/expansion of parent committees Helping parents help students
Space and Facilities	Space and Facilities	Space and Facilities	Space and Facilities
Resource centres design Building renovations Shared facilities	Shared facilities and space reallocation	Shared facilities and space reallocation	Shared facilities and space reallocation

things as unit length, degree of difficulty, directions for students, and tests. A few teachers managed to "field test" a few units in the spring.

The actual production (typing, proofreading, translation, duplication) of the units was a major undertaking. The cafeteria was set up as a word processing pool with ten typists at work all summer long (see "Assistance", above).

Plans and efforts notwithstanding, some departments and teachers were not able to meet the initial 10 unit goal by the opening of school in September 1985. In some cases, this was due to backlogs in typing and duplication. In others, the teachers involved were simply unable to meet the expectations. Many were responsible for developing as many as 15 courses or more. Teachers were under pressure the first year to complete the unfinished courses, and to stay ahead of students enrolled in those courses.

By the end of the first year of implementation, the original courses were mostly in place. Attention and effort shifted to curriculum revision.

Curriculum revision: unit length. Teachers had difficulty at first predicting how long and difficult to make the units. Initial feedback from students indicated that units in many courses took far longer than the expected five to six hours to finish. Factors contributing to unit length problems included the quantity of work assigned, lack of clarity in written directions, and overreliance on reading and writing.

Due to the unit length problem, many students fell behind in reaching their unit and course completion goals during the first year of implementation. This placed immediate demands on the administration and teachers to reduce unit length. Teachers felt pressured to make revisions in order to make troublesome units more "doable" for students not as far along in a course. Some began deleting parts of the units and made notes for future revision. Others actually tried to rewrite their units at the time, and got caught between initial curriculum development and the need for curriculum revision. Mid-way through the first year the administration implemented a unit adjustment procedure to compensate for lengthy units. Teachers were told to cut three units and to credit students with an "adjustment unit" after units four, eight, and twelve.

Despite revisions over the spring and summer, complaints about lengthy units from students, parents, and even teacher advisors, persisted during year two. Unit length was seen as a major hindrance to student progress in the system, and a focus of student and parent dissatisfaction.

A unit length review committee was created in year two to investigate complaints about lengthy units. Based on staff input from the first Project Renewal Meeting, the principal issued another edict requiring the departments to reduce each course to the time equivalent of 17 units. Suggestions included reducing the amount of evaluation, striking excess material, giving more credit to long units, video-taping seminars and lectures, giving credit for related work, and adapting assignments to individual needs.

The departments and teachers complied, though some found it very difficult to submit their courses to further reduction. This was the second mandated reduction in less than two years. By the end of year two the unit length problem was essentially resolved. Concerns about unit length were superseded by concerns about diversity of learning modes and curriculum quality.

Curriculum revision: alternative learning modes. The short- term goal was to get units developed and in place in all courses. The long-term goal was to provide variation and options in the learning process to accomodate student learning styles, and to increase skills in using different kinds of learning resources. Concurrent with revisions for unit length and clarity, the administration began to encourage the incorporation of alternatives to reading and writing in the units. This emphasis began with the acquisition of more audio-visual materials in year one.

The incorporation of alternative learning modes became a major goal in year two. The Principal and heads developed a resource booklet of extra-curricular activities that could be built into units for courses in each department. Teachers were encouraged to do more video-taping of seminars and lectures, especially in mathematics, where students and parents were asking for more teacher-directed instruction. One of the heads developed a checklist for teachers to evaluate their courses in terms of the variety of learning modes employed (written assignments, lecture, seminar, oral or visual reports, documents, AV, and tests).

The addition of alternative learning activities into units and courses was also seen as a useful way to reduce unit length by decreasing the dependency on reading and writing activities. Actual integration of AV materials, co-instructional activities, and other alternative learning processes into existing courses was an ongoing focus of curriculum revision during year three.

Curriculum revision: ministry guidelines. Project Excellence came into existence shortly after the official adoption of OSIS (Ontario Schools: Intermediate and Senior Divisons), the Ministry of Education's 1984 curriculum policy for Grades 7 to 12 and OACs. Concurrent with OSIS, the ministry began issuing new curriculum guidelines for virtually all subject areas. The ongoing release of new guidelines has been an additional reason for curriculum revision in Project Excellence. Anticipation of new guidelines has actually been a disincentive to revision in some courses. Teachers have been reluctant to invest time revising existing courses knowing that new guidelines were pending.

Seminars. The use of optional and mandatory seminars in courses has been an ongoing focus of debate in Project Excellence since year one of implementation (see chapters 3 and 10 for description of seminar function and use).

During the first two years the administration encouraged teachers to increase seminar use, as a means of responding to parent concerns about the lack of opportunities for student interaction and about the absence of teacher-directed instruction. Access to seminars at regular intervals was also a way to help structure and maintain student progress in a course. Finally, seminars in some courses were regarded as an alternative learning mode. Students could complete a unit on their own, or do it through participation in a seminar.

The purpose, frequency, and scheduling of seminars were debated at the department and school levels during year three of the Project. The critical issue was more the frequency than the content of seminars. Some courses were rumoured to have too many compulsory seminars. That is, they were being run as traditional classes meeting on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. This practice is regarded as contrary to the principles of Project Excellence by the administration, though no action was taken that year.

A second issue was the scheduling of seminars. Teachers in resource centres which were not open all day, such as the gymnasium and the shops, believed that students were often prevented from working in their areas due to scheduling overlap with compulsory seminars in other courses. The possibility of establishing "protected times" for these centres to avoid seminar conflicts was taken into consideration.

4.6.2. Student Progress

Unit completion. Student progress has been a major concern of the administration, teachers, students, and parents throughout the history of Project Excellence. The issue is the rate at which students complete units and courses. In order to obtain the 30 credits needed for graduation in four years, students have to complete about eight courses per year. In order to complete eight courses a year, they have to maintain a unit completion pace of about four to six units per week. Attaining and maintaining this pace has been difficult for many students in Project Excellence. Over time, the focus of concern has shifted from all students and graduating students, to groups of students with special needs.

Problems with student progress became apparent early in the first year of implementation. Unit length was a major contributing factor, and became a focus of initial curriculum revision. Measures to improve student time management and study habits were also introduced. Similar concerns arose during year two, and further measures to reduce unit length, and to assist students were carried out. Lack of progress motivated some students to transfer to the board's high school in Iroquois Falls (see chapter 11).

In addition to the overall monitoring of student progress, certain groups of students have been singled out for special attention. The administration has kept close tabs on the progress of graduating seniors each year to ensure that they do not fall behind in the few months remaining towards graduation. This was a particular concern the first year, when students were still quite unaccustomed to the system.

During year two, the staff determined that there were two types of students not progressing, the discipline cases and those who needed a quiet place to work and special assistance to improve their study habits. Room 210, which became the Independent Learning Assistance Centre in year three (see chapter 3), was created to help students in the latter group. Another type of student progress problem began to be recognized in year three. Some department heads began tracking down students who were enrolled in courses, but who were inactive or making little progress. There were rumours of students registered in courses for as much as two years without completion.

The TA system permits regular close monitoring of student progress by each student's teacher advisor. During the first year, the TAs and administration came to agreement on standardized formats for recording and reporting unit and course completion plans and progress. This has enabled the administration to keep a close watch on student progress, as well. For two years the Principal met three or four times a year with each TA to review their students' progress. During year three, the vice-principal/TA teams were set up to review student unit progress collectively on a bi-weekly basis (see chapter 3 and "Management", above).

General concerns about student progress seemed to have subsided by year three. Based on our evaluation, however, this is an issue which requires further attention (see chapter 11).

Timetabling. The first year, there were no real guidelines for TAs and students concerning the timetabling of courses over the school year. Many students held off until the end of the year for some difficult subjects like mathematics. Then they got caught in a time-bind trying to finish these courses by the end of the school year. Students were working overtime at home. The teachers were overloaded with requests for help, resulting in long line-ups for assistance and further student frustration. Students and parents began blaming the system and teachers. For year two, the administration instructed TAs to take care that students did not leave their most challenging courses until the end of the year.

Further attention was given in year three to student timetabling practices. In light of concerns about credit accumulation (see Chapter 10), the administration suggested that TAs encourage students to work on four courses per day (eight every two days). A second timetabling issue concerned enrolment and progress in technical and commercial courses. Some teachers felt that students were being counselled by TAs to do academic courses early in the year, and to hold off on practical subjects. An administrative review of teacher advisor records did not confirm this concern.

Overall, students still have considerable freedom to timetable their coursework on a full year, semestered, term, or mixed schedule. The concern has been to ensure that they maintain an appropriate balance of academic and practical, challenging and less challenging, compulsory and elective courses, and that they accumulate the credits needed to graduate in an appropriate time frame.

Mathematics. Student progress in mathematics is the one area which has been consistently singled out as problematic for substantial numbers of students in Project Excellence. As pointed out in the preceding discussion, the problems with student progress in mathematics began the first year, partly as a result of poor planning on the part of students and TAs. Even with closer supervision of student progress in mathematics, however, student and parent concerns about student learning and progress in mathematics courses persisted throughout years two and three. Students and parents complain about lack of ready access to assistance from mathematics teachers. Many believe that students would have less difficulty mastering mathematics in conventional teacher-directed group learning settings than with the individualized curriculum and teacher consultation method.

The mathematics department and administration have attempted to resolve the problems in mathematics by increasing the number of mathematics seminars available to students, video-taping lectures in some courses, acquiring mathematics software, and re-introducing comprehensive examinations to help students consolidate their learning. For year four, plans were underway to hire an additional mathematics teacher and to relocate the mathematics department closer to the commercial department, in order to facilitate access to the computers and to business math and accounting teachers.

French immersion. Oral language development in French has been another area of ongoing concern about student progress. The concern arises from complaints about lack of sufficient opportunities for speaking and interaction in French on the part of students and parents of students who graduated from elementary school French immersion programs, and who desire to continue practicing French in some of their content courses, in addition to French courses. The school has responded mainly by trying to increase the oral language component of French department courses for non-native speakers, and by providing more extra-curricular opportunities in French. As of year three, little special attention had yet been given to this issue in other subjects taught in French.

Marking and record keeping. Marking has been a major time management issue for teachers in Project Excellence. Teachers said the marking load doubled from the old system. Marking is constant, and student motivation and progress depend on getting marks back as quickly as possible. Record keeping could be turned over to resource centre assistants, but many teachers feel that recording marks keeps them in touch with individual student progress.

Although sample record keeping forms and procedures were acquired from Bishop Carroll, these had to be adapted or developed anew for Project Excellence. Through individual and department level experimentation and sharing in the first year, consensus developed around some common formats and procedures for school-wide record keeping needs, such as green slips and report cards. Other record keeping practices, such as teacher advisor unit completion records, were not officially standardized. Each department also had to establish a policy for determining final grades.

4.6.3. Student Adjustment

Student adjustment to Project Excellence and assistance for students in making that adjustment have been areas of concern.

Orientation. In the development phase of the Project, students received minimal preparation for their new role. The Principal, vice-principals, and guidance counselor held one all day slide and tape demonstration for interested students. A few students benefitted from field testing of some units. They all began meeting with their teacher advisors on a trial basis towards the end of the school year.

During the development phase, orientation for incoming Grade 8's consisted of a half-day visit to the high school, where new students met with their assigned TAs and TA groups. In year two, this orientation was extended to four days, based on suggestions from the Parent Advisory Committee. During these four days, students not only meet with their TA groups, but actually begin doing units for the coming year. The new orientation program is regarded as quite effective and has continued with minor improvements (see chapter 3).

Grade 9 student adjustment. The adjustment of Grade 9 students to the individualized system was an important concern during the first two years of the Project. The issue was mainly the perceived need to ease the transition from homogeneous group learning in a classroom to independent learning in a resource centre with students of all grades and academic levels. A related issue was the perceived need to help Grade 9 students get into the habit of consulting teachers about any problems with their units.

At the end of the first year, the Principal and department heads engaged in a lengthy debate about Grade 9 student adjustment. The discussion resulted in the establishment of "Grade 9 Group Learning" (see chapter 3). Blocks of time are reserved for Grade 9's in each resource centre during the initial months of the school year to facilitate their adjustment to the system.

Student responsibility, time management, and study skills. Students coming in to the system are not equally ready to accept responsibility for independent learning, nor do they all have the discipline, time management, and study skills required to succeed in Project Excellence. Finding effective ways to help non-productive students cope with responsibility, manage their time wisely, and improve their self-directed study skills has been a major focus of concern.

The teacher advisors have been the main source of assistance to students, and developing teacher advisor skills has been an important focus of staff development (see "TA Role Assistance", above). Teachers had little more than their instincts to rely on during the first year to find ways to motivate students and to keep them working at an acceptable pace. Methods of "controls" (e.g., having students set up written plans for what to do and where to do it, having students work in the TA's centre) were developed largely by trial and error, and by sharing experiences with other TAs.

Student time management and concentration were a recurring focus of discussion in department head and Project Renewal meetings during year two. The heads generated several lists of ideas for improving students' use of time, concentration, and contact with teachers. Policies on student movement, noise in centres, TA group meetings, and monitoring students' daily plans resulted from the first Project Renewal meeting. An introduction to study and organizational skills to succeed in Project Excellence was incorporated into the Grade 8 orientation program.

Apart from generalized assistance through the TAs, the major Project-level response to the need of some students for additional help adapting to the Project has been Room 210. This "independent study room" was first set up in year two as a detention hall for students who were loitering in the halls, not working, and not progressing. The function of Room 210 changed during year three. It became a special study centre for students requiring quiet and intensive help with study skills (see chapter 3 for details).

A new strategy for motivating discipline cases was also introduced. The Principal, vice-principals, and technical studies teacher in charge of Adult Education became the ad hoc "teacher advisors" for a small group of students on the brink of suspension for lack of responsibility in their school work and behaviour.

Contact with subject teachers. Another persistent issue for the Project has been student contact with subject teachers. Student and parent concerns centre mainly around the availability of teachers when students want help. As elsewhere discussed (chapter 7, chapter 14), our study confirms that students sometimes wait for help while teachers consult with other students, but we found little evidence that teachers were unavailable to students. The problem, rather, appears to stem from student habits of studying in centres other than those corresponding to the courses they are working on, i.e., away from the teachers best qualified to help. In addition, small departments do not stay open all day because of limited staffing. This limits the availability of teachers in those areas. The major administrative response to concerns about access to teachers has been to encourage the use of seminars, and to monitor and respond to department staffing needs on an ongoing basis. In the individualized system, course enrolments fluctuate throughout the school year. One of the teachers, in particular, has functioned as a "utility teacher". His schedule is periodically adjusted to provide additional help in different departments.

Contact with subject teachers has also been an issue from the perspective of teachers. Teacher concerns centre around the fact that they may have little or no personal contact with students in their courses unless the student seeks help, or the teacher calls the student in to discuss the results of an assignment or test. This concern was a focus of discussion in department head and staff meetings during years one and two. Apart from encouraging student participation in seminars, however, no organized interventions to ensure student contact with subject teachers were planned or implemented across the school (see recommendations, chapter 10).

Native Students. As a result of the creation of a new Indian band in the vicinity of Cochrane, approximately 30 Native students registered for school at E.S.C.H.S. in the fall of 1987 (a total of about 50 Native students at the school). There were concerns about the weak academic backgrounds of some, their social adaptation to the school, and communication with parents. The Principal directed the vice-principals to monitor the progress of Native students closely through the bi-weekly unit review meetings.

By mid-winter the Principal began to mobilize interest and action around the special needs of Native students in Project Excellence. He acquired information on Native education from other jurisdictions, and brought in a Native education consultant for a Professional Development Day session. In the spring, the local Native Friendship Centre held a two-day workshop on Native culture and concerns for interested organizations in the community. The Principal and several of the staff took part. The Principal also created an advisory committee of Native parents, negotiated a grant to hire a part-time Native counselor, and created office space for her at the school. In sum, efforts were being made to facilitate the adjustment and success of Native students in Project Excellence.

4.6.4. Student Conduct

On the whole, student discipline problems have diminished. Gone are the line-ups of students sent to the vice-principal's office for insubordination in the classroom. If students cause disturbances in a resource centre, teachers can simply tell them to go study elsewhere. The first year there were some concerns about student respect for authority in the resource centres, particularly in relation to non-instructional staff. This problem was resolved with the introduction of a stricter discipline code requiring students to present their I.D. cards to *any* adult upon request.

The major student conduct issues arising in Project Excellence relate to students' use of time, movement in the halls, and noise in the centres. That is, the problems have more to do with students not working or distracting other students, than with student-teacher relations, as in the old system.

Breaks. During the first two years of implementation, students were permitted to take breaks when they wanted. This policy followed the Bishop Carroll model, and was based on the principle of leaving the responsibility to students for managing their own time and schoolwork. The policy was problematic. Some students spent more time loitering in the halls than at work in the centres, and there was constant noise and movement in the halls and in and out of the centres. This proved disruptive to students trying to work in the centres. Yielding to pressure from teachers, the administration agreed at the end of year two to adopt a "common break" policy. Official ten minute breaks were scheduled at mid-morning and mid-afternoon. This system appeared to be working quite well during year three. In addition to reducing the amount of student movement in halls the rest of the day, it provided a time during the day for students to socialize with peers from the same age and grade level.

Student movement and noise. Student movement to and from the resource centres and noise in the halls and in the centres, have been recurring concerns since the beginning of the Project. Because students organize their own time and do not have to study in the centre for the courses they are working on, there are legitimate reasons for students to move back and forth between centres. The problem is to prevent loitering and to control student socializing in the halls outside of the breaks. During the first two years, actions to control the halls were taken, such as prohibiting movement in the halls before lunch and at the end of the school day, the vice-principals patrolling the halls, and threatening persistent loiterers with suspension. Loitering was less of an issue in year three. The movement of students from Jeunesse Nord to the gymnasium, library, and cafeteria has exacerbated the noise in the halls problem. This, however, is a consequence of the shared facilities, not of Project Excellence.

Controlling noise in the centres has been a further source of discussion in heads and staff meetings throughout the Project history. This issue has been dealt with at the department level. Some departments have declared their centres "quiet areas". Others maintain quiet areas and group work areas within the same centre. Others attempt to control the level of student interaction and noise through seating arrangements (individual desks, tables, study carrels). Of course, the teachers on duty in each centre are responsible for supervising student activity and for asking those who socialize to get to work or to leave.

Closing of centres. One factor contributing to student movement and noise in the halls is the unscheduled closing of centres, due to teacher absences. The policy has been to close centres when there is no teacher available to supervise and assist students. The resource centre assistants are only half-time employees, and it has not been considered appropriate to leave centres open with only an RCA on the premises. The problem in the halls arises from the fact that the seating capacity in the centres is limited. Regular opening and closing of centres is co-ordinated to ensure that seats are available for all students. Unscheduled closings can upset the balance, and increase student activity in the halls. The lack of supply teachers qualified to work in this system has been an obstacle to covering teacher absences. A satisfactory solution to this problem was still being sought during year three of Project Excellence.

Camping out. The tendency of many students to "camp out" in particular centres for the day became a focus of administrative attention at the beginning of year three. As reported in the student survey (chapter 7), most students have favourite spots to work and bring their unit work from other centres to those places. The only administrative action taken in year three was to limit students to no more than a half-day in the library, in order to ensure space for students doing research (see chapter 7 for related recommendations).

4.6.5. School Climate and Student Interaction

Student interaction and school spirit. Apart from student conduct, a number of school climate issues were identified during the first year of Project Excellence. The first arose from parent concerns that students were not getting enough opportunities to interact in groups with their peers. The administration responded with written suggestions to teachers to plan activities for TA groups, and to provide more seminars in their courses.

A second concern was that school spirit was undermined by the pressure to work and the emphasis on individual performance. The administration and heads brainstormed ways of creating more "joy" in the school through large group presentations and extra-curricular activities. Extra-curricular involvement was singled out for improvement in year two by the CEDSS evaluation team. Our data suggest that while teacher leadership in extra-curricular activities may have dropped somewhat in the first couple of years, this was transitory, and due to the initial time management problems experienced by teachers. We perceived no lack of extra-curricular programs and activities in the school and about half the student body claimed to be participating (chapter 7).

Francophone identity. During year one, francophone parents and faculty expressed concerns about the loss of opportunities for francophone students to maintain a group identity in Project Excellence. Apart from the French TA groups, there were few naturally occurring contexts for francophone students to meet in groups with other francophone students. The francophone faculty tabled a plan to increase opportunities for francophone students to interact as a group, mainly through extra-curricular activities.

4.6.6. Enrolment, Staffing, Program Development and Maintenance

Enrolment decline at E.S.C.H.S. continued after Project Excellence came into place. The major causes of attrition were the opening of the French-language high school by the separate school board in 1985 and the decision by the public school board to allow Cochrane students to transfer to the board's other high school in Iroquois Falls if they chose not to attend or continue in Project Excellence at E.S.C.H.S. The loss of students affected staffing and led to reductions in French-language programs and to growth in other areas, such as co-operative education and adult education.

French-language staff and programs. The loss of francophone students to Jeunesse Nord resulted in the loss of teachers in the French-language instructional unit. Six teachers transferred to Jeunesse Nord that year, three the second year, and one in year three. By year three the enrolment pattern between the two schools had stabilized. The staff at E.S.C.H.S. were able to develop and maintain the majority of French-language courses despite the loss of staff. At the end of year three, however, music and family studies courses in French were removed from the course calendar due to lack of staff in those areas. A decision was pending for French courses in commercial subjects.

Adult education and co-operative education. To avoid further cuts in staff at the end of year one, the administration and staff decided to establish a co-operative education program, and to build up the existing adult education program. Two technical studies teachers were relieved of teacher advisor duties and appointed co-ordinators of these programs. Both programs flourished in the flexible timetabling and independent learning system.

Enrolment in co-operative education outstripped the co-ordinating and supervising capabilities of the single program co-ordinator within a year. In year three, several other teachers took on responsibility for supervising co-op student work placements (see chapter 3 for additional information on co-operative education and adult education).

Transfer students. In September of year two, the board responded to pressure from certain students and parents and agreed to let students transfer to Iroquois Falls Secondary School. Enough students were involved to justify providing a bus. The motives and characteristics of these students are examined in detail in chapter 11. In general, they were students who felt they had lost a year of high school while participating in the Project. A small number of Grade 8 students have opted out of Project Excellence without even attending.

4.6.7. Parent Involvement

Informing and gaining parent support became a focus of administrative attention *after* the decision to adopt Project Excellence. An open information and discussion meeting was held, and attended by 250 parents. Parent enthusiasm for the change was less than desired. As a result, a second meeting was organized and a multi-media publicity campaign was mounted. A series of articles, including interviews with the Principal and students, appeared in the local and area newspapers. One of the vice-principals was interviewed on radio and television. Although parent opposition was not organized or vocal enough to stop the Project, school officials acknowledge in retrospect that more should have been done to prepare parents for the change.

Project Excellence aroused considerable furor in the community during the first year of implementation. Letters appeared in the local newspaper. Teacher advisors had to defend the Project in their calls to parents. As described by one teacher, "there was swirling controversy around us in the community...you could never get away from it". Critics alleged that teachers were no longer teaching and reacted to the fact that students were not in classes. There were serious concerns that students were "not going to finish their year" in this system. The Principal bore the brunt of the criticism, and the staff admired his resilience. The superintendents and trustees stood solidly behind the Project.

The Principal established a Parent Advisory Committee in the fall of year one, and began meeting with them on a regular basis to get feedback and to share information about what was happening in the school. In January of that year the administration organized a Parent Evening. The Principal spoke about the Project and gave parents a chance to air their questions and concerns. Then the parents met in small groups with their child's teacher advisor. Parent concerns at this meeting centred on such matters as access to teachers, the need for student interaction, student motivation and progress, exams, grading, workload, student responsibility, and attendance. In the spring the Principal solicited comments from the staff about "the positive things happening in Project Excellence", and sent a letter to parents. The year ended with an Open House for parents to observe students and staff at work.

Special mechanisms for communication with and feedback from parents, such as the Parent Advisory Committee and Parent/TA nights, carried over into the second year of Project Excellence. At the fall Parent/TA night, the teacher advisors were each assisted by members of the administration and the board. The beginning of year two was a demoralizing time for the staff. A series of student letters highly critical of the Project appeared in the local newspaper. The decision by some students and parents to transfer to Iroquois Falls was another disappointment. In terms of the school program, parent concerns tended to focus on two areas, mathematics and French-language development.

By year three, vocal community opposition to the Project subsided, though the administration continued to seek ways to further parent understanding and involvement. The Parent Advisory Committee underwent its first major turnover in membership. In response to feedback from the committee about continued misunderstanding in the community, the administration submitted a series of student articles about the Project to the local newspaper. A Graduate Parent Advisory Committee and a Native Advisory Committee were also set up that year (see "Implementation Management" and "Implementation Evaluation", above).

4.6.8. Space and Facilities

Preparation. Apart from curriculum development, subject area resource centre preparation was the major area of teacher and administrator activity during the development phase of the Project. Decisions concerning the design and arrangements for each centre were determined by heads and teachers at the department level. Ideas for setting up the centres were borrowed from Bishop Carroll and École Georges-Vanier (see "Implementation Assistance", above).

Renovations, such as knocking down walls between classrooms to make multi-area resource centres and arranging for the construction of counters and unit shelves, were co-ordinated by the administration. Most of the work was done by the custodians and by the woodworking teacher and students.

Space allocation has been a recurrent concern since the start of the Project, largely because of the shared facilities arrangements with the new separate school, Jeunesse Nord. The program at Jeunesse Nord was phased in grade by grade, so the enrolment and space requirements continued to increase over the first three years. This resulted in the annual shifting of centres and office space for teacher advisors. The situation appeared to have stablized by year four, with E.S.C.H.S. occupying classrooms on the second floor, and Jeunesse Nord on the first.

4.7. EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

As part of our evaluation, we assessed the effectiveness of the organizational process used to facilitate implementation of Project Excellence at E.S.C.H.S., a question of obvious interest to school personnel in other jurisdictions considering adopting this system of education.

Implementation researchers in education typically judge the success of an implementation process by the degree of implementation of expected changes in teacher roles and learning materials, the prospects for continuation of the innovation, student outcomes, and participant satisfaction. Our analysis of student outcomes appears in chapters 11-13. Findings related to participant satisfaction appear in chapter 14. Here, we evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation process in terms of teachers' Stages of Concern and Levels of Use of Project Excellence and in terms of the prospects for continuation.

Stages of Concern (SoC) describe the *feelings* teachers have about an innovation over the process of its adoption and implementation. Levels of Use (LoU) describe the innovation-related *behaviours* of teachers in terms of a developmental scale for implementation (Hall, Loucks, Rutherford, and Newlove, 1975). Together, these two measures provide a general picture of the stage of implementation for individual teachers and the school as a whole. A more detailed evaluation of teacher practices relative to Project ideals appears in chapter 5.

4.7.1. Stages of Concern for Teachers

Teacher concerns about Project Excellence were measured in two ways. In our teacher change interviews, we asked teachers to describe their concerns at various stages in the Project history.

In addition, we administered the Stage of Concern Questionnaire (Hall, George, and Rutherford, 1979) concurrent with our status of implementation interviews in January of year three.

Teachers involved in a change process will have different kinds of concerns about the change at different stages of implementation. While individuals will vary in their concerns, a general pattern is to progress through concerns about self, to management, to impact. Table 4-5 names and illustrates the seven basic Stages of Concern. Readers interested in a fuller explanation of the Stages of Concern model should consult the references listed in chapter 2.

During the initial development phase, teachers had predictably high information concerns related to finding out more about Project Excellence and what was implied in getting the curriculum, the facilities, and themselves ready for opening day in September 1985. Personal concerns were high, as well, and related to apprehensions about parent reaction and about whether teachers would actually have their courses ready on time. While some in-service for the teacher advisor role took place during this period, most teachers were too preoccupied with curriculum and too unaware of what being a TA would actually involve

Table 4-5

Stages of Concern: Typical Expressions of Concern about an Innovation

Stages of Concern			Expressions of Concern from Teachers
SELF	0	AWARENESS	I am not concerned about it (the change)
	1	INFORMATION	I would like to know more about it. What is it?
	2	PERSONAL	How will using it affect me?
TASK	3	MANAGEMENT	I seem to be spending all my time in getting material ready.
IMPACT	4	CONSEQUENCE	How is my use affecting kids?
	5	COLLABORATION	I am concerned about relating what I am doing with what others are doing to help kids more.
	6	REFOCUSING	I have some ideas about something that would work even better.

(CBAM PROJECT: Hall, George, and Rutherford, 1979)

to be worried about that role at that stage. Management concerns centred on carrying out the two major development tasks, preparing the curriculum and resource centres.

We asked teachers how ready they were when school opened in the fall. The following comments illustrate their responses.

> "I had at least 10 units in every course"
>
> "Gung ho...Very ready!"
>
> "Not ready enough...I had the first five units done in a few courses...and the kids caught up to that pretty fast. So they were pushing me most of the first year to get units done."
>
> "We tried to have ten units written and five on the shelves and didn't make it. The first day of class there were units not typed, not photocopied, misplaced."
>
> "As a TA I didn't realize how unready I was probably until six or eight months later. There was nothing I would have realized in September."

In terms of the initial production goal of ten units per course, the curriculum was barely ready by opening day. Some teachers and departments were further along than others. Teachers also felt they were not ready for the TA role. Talk about the role meant little until they actually began to implement it.

Table 4-6 presents interview quotes which illustrate teacher concerns about their roles as subject teachers and teacher advisors over the first three years of Project Excellence implementation.

Teachers found the first year of implementation challenging, exciting, and unpredictable. Most found it stressful, frustrating, and discouraging at times, as well. The initial disadvantages were offset by the novelty of the new roles and the improvement in discipline in terms of teacher-student relations. As subject teachers, they had high management concerns, focussed mainly on getting their curriculum work done, and on keeping up with marking. Many were caught between the need to finish their courses and to begin revising them at the same time.

The biggest change for teachers was becoming a teacher advisor. Information and personal concerns associated with the TA role were high, as were management concerns related to learning the new role. The major concerns of TAs in the first year were figuring out how to motivate and help students adjust to the system, establishing TA-student relationships, learning the guidance functions, and communicating with parents.

Both as teachers and as TAs, the staff found year two of implementation less stressful than the first. This was due partly to the shift in energy from initial curriculum development to curriculum revision, partly to the experience gained from year one, and partly to the socialization of students into the system. The management concerns of teachers began shifting to consequence concerns focussed on revising units to make them more "doable" and flexible, and modifying instruction, so as to improve student progress and learning. Teachers became more comfortable with the TA role. Initial personal concerns about carrying out the role subsided. They experienced a combination of information, management, and consequence concerns associated with the continued search for ways to motivate and assist students. Apprehension about communicating with parents diminished, as each TA settled into communication routines with parents of each TA student.

Most teachers reported no major changes in their teacher and TA roles during year three of Project Excellence. As teachers, their concerns continued to focus on modifying their courses and teaching to improve student outcomes (consequence). Some teachers still expressed management concerns related to organizing their time for ongoing curriculum work. A number of teachers began taking on new responsibilities (e.g., co-operative education, extra-curricular activities, the Learning Assistance Centre). In the TA role, teachers had settled into comfortable routines; however, many were trying out or looking for

Table 4-6

Role Concerns of Teachers: Implementation Years One, Two, and Three

Year 1 (1986/87)	Year 2 (1986/87)	Year 3 (1986/87)
OVERALL	OVERALL	OVERALL
"It was exciting...different...You realized all the benefits of the system. But it was a little worrisome too, because there was a lot of rebellion in town. So that was a difficulty having put in all that time and apparently getting no thanks for it."	"I found the second year easier than the first because I became more organized." "It wasn't quite as stressful. We were better prepared. Grade 9s coming in were better prepared. We knew more how to talk to parents." "You're still looking at overall length of units and courses. You're looking at helping kids do units faster, both as teacher and TA."	"I feel the workload is easier, but then that may be due to becoming organized and seeing what has happened in the past two years and being prepared for it."
SUBJECT TEACHER ROLE	SUBJECT TEACHER ROLE	SUBJECT TEACHER ROLE
"It was really a survival year. It really was. That first year we were under pressure to do so much in so short of time...to keep one step ahead of the kids in that first year with units and marking." "Dans le centre? Oui, c'était vraiment différent. C'était plus relaxant, plus intéressant. Le plus fascinant, c'était peut-être la discipline, car on n'en avait pas à faire comparativement à avant." "Some units were not well written. Students did not understand what I wanted. Some units were too long. They needed to be shortened."	"You had more confidence in what you were doing in regards to the units. You weren't under the pressure you were the first year." "My ability to adjust units on the spot improved." "I became aware of lack of skill development." "I made revisions to my units and made them more concise and do-able." "I did a lot of video-taping of units for the students."	"Time management. I don't think there's adequate time for curriculum revision and teacher advising." "I have more time to go after kids in my subjects that haven't been on a unit for a while." "Je voulais que mes jeunes passent plus vite. J'ai fait une plus grande structuration, plus de séminaires qui sont obligatoires." "I'm trying to work with shops outside of the school more." "Un poste s'est ouvert dans le programme d'éducation co-opérative. On m'a demandé si je le voulais." "I resumed some of the extra-curricular things I put aside the first two years of the Project."
TEACHER ADVISOR ROLE	TEACHER ADVISOR ROLE	TEACHER ADVISOR ROLE
"I was definitely floundering. I didn't know what tools I could use to motivate the students." "When you interview a student it's difficult to break the ice at first." "There was a lot of apprehension, especially when we got dealing with the TA parts. I felt inadequate with the whole Guidance part." "There was controversy in the community. You couldn't escape it."	"I was more efficient. I was more responsive to my TAs concerns and to my parents' concerns. I could understand them better." "I knew what options I had open to try and improve students' performance." "J'avais plus d'experience. J'étais plus conscient des jeux que les jeunes te font."	"I'm more relaxed and competent with my role as a TA ." "I continue to beg, borrow and steal ideas from other TAs." "J'ai plus de temps à donner aux jeunes. C'est plus facile. Mes jeunes cette année avancent plus vite que par les années passées." "Dans mon rôle de conseiller, je suis beaucoup plus direct."

better ways of working with their TA students (consequence).

Concerns statements were mainly gathered from the subset of teachers selected for our change process interviews. In addition, we administered the Stages of Concern Questionnaire to all teachers (N=32). Responses to the questionnaire can be developed into a "concerns profile" for individuals or groups of teachers implementing a particular change. This profile provides a picture of the status of implementation at one point in time.

Table 4-7

Concerns Profile for All Teachers

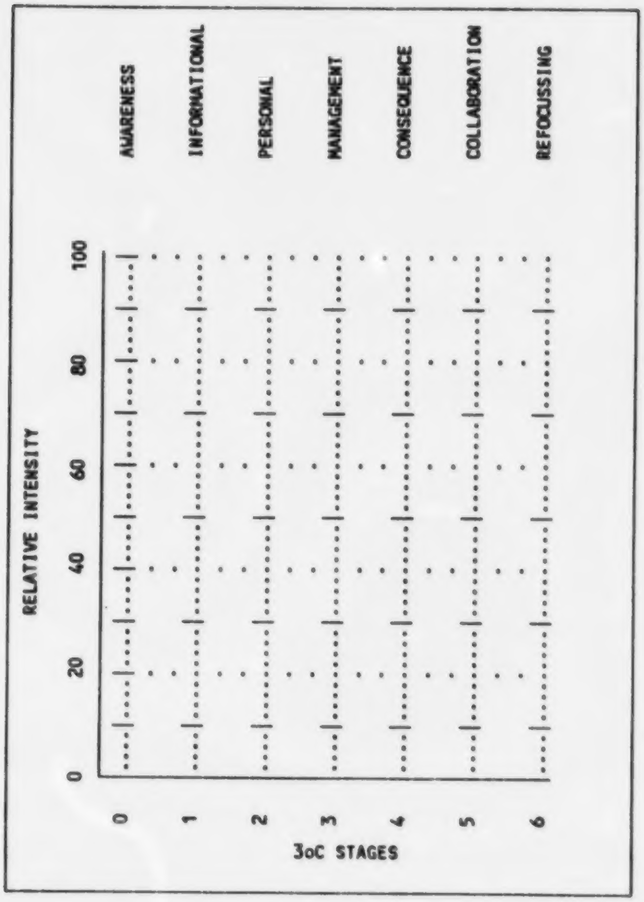

Table 4-7 shows the Stages of Concern Profile for all teachers in Project Excellence. Reading the concerns profile calls for looking at the peaks, which mark areas of intense concerns, and at movement from left to right, or from self-oriented to impact-oriented concerns. Successful progress with implementation would be indicated by peaks to the right side of the profile, i.e., with emphasis on impact-oriented concerns.

The concerns profile confirms that teachers as a whole have progressed in their roles in Project Excellence to concerns about student impact. While teachers are still resolving some managment issues, this is a healthy response. Personal concerns, common to early or unresolved implementation, are almost non-existent. The most frequent concern shown is that of consequence or focus on the impact of their actions for students. The third peak, refocussing, likely reflects ongoing refinement and problem-solving.

In analyzing the Stages of Concern data, we looked for possible differences between different subgroups of teachers, such as academic versus practical, English section versus French section, and heads versus regular teachers. Department heads were the only group showing a distinct profile. Management concerns dominated all other concerns in their profile. This may be indicative of their continuing search for stable solutions to issues like staffing the centres and co-ordinating curriculum (see chapter 6 for discussion of head role), rather than management of their individual roles as teachers and TAs.

Considering the magnitude of change for teachers implementing Project Excellence (see chapter 5 for description of the nature of the change), the concerns profile indicates that the organizational process used to facilitate implementation of the teacher role at E.S.C.H.S. has been quite effective.

4.7.2. Levels of Use for Teachers

The second part of our evaluation of the support system for implementation looks at the overall progress of teachers in mastering expected subject teacher and teacher advisor behaviours. We incorporated key questions from the Levels of Use Interview into our Status of Implementation Interview with all teachers. The Levels of Use framework presents a developmental scale of change- related behaviours, beginning with Non-Use (0), Orientation (I), and Preparation (II), and then progressing to Mechanical use (III), Routine use (IV/IVA), Collaboration (V), and Renewal (VI) (Hall, Loucks, Rutherford, and Newlove, 1975). The parts of the scale pertinent to teachers in Project Excellence are as follows.

LEVELS OF USE DEFINITIONS

III (mechanical use). This is a state in which the teacher focusses most effort on the short-term, day to day use of the innovation with little time for reflection. Changes in use are made more to meet teacher needs than student needs. Changes are primarily in response to logistical and organizational problems.

III/IVA (resolving mechanical problems). At this level, the teacher is more in control of everyday affairs and can begin to look at student needs. Their use is beginning to stabilize.

IVA (routine use). At this point use of the innovation is stabilized. Few if any changes are being made in ongoing use. Little preparation or thought is being given to improving innovation use or its consequences for students. The teacher reports that use of the innovation is going smoothly.

IVA/IVB (stable but considering the need for refinement). Teachers at this level feel comfortable with what they are doing and the outcomes for students, but are beginning to consider ways that they might improve the innovation for students. They are making small adjustments to the normal routine in relation to student needs.

IVB (refining use). At this level, teachers are actively exploring and experimenting with alternative uses of the innovation to increase the impact on students within their immediate sphere of influence. Variations are based on knowledge of short-and long-term consequences for students.

Table 4-8 shows how teachers rated according to the Levels of Use scale in January-February of the third year of implementation. Since the demands of being a subject teacher and a TA differ, teachers were rated separately for each part of the role.

The Levels of Use data indicate that teachers in Project Excellence are doing extremely well in comparison with the implementation of innovations in other school settings. With adequate support for implementation, one would normally expect teacher use of an innovation involving major changes in practice to be stabilizing by the third year of implementation. The data shows this to be the case for teachers involved with Project Excellence at E.S.C.H.S. The majority of teachers are at routine use or higher for both aspects of their role. The number of teachers actively working on refining the curriculum, teaching, and other components of the Project is remarkably high, as well.

Table 4-8

Levels of Use of Project Excellence[4]

Level of Use	Teacher Advisor Role	Subject Teacher Role
III (Mechanical)	2	2
III/IVA	0	3
IVA (Routine)	19	19
IVA/IVB	4	0
IVB (Refining)	6	6
NA	1	2

The Levels of Use findings confirm our previously stated judgement that the support system used at E.S.C.H.S. to assist teachers in carrying out their new roles has been effective. Personnel from other schools interested in adopting this system of education should take a close look at the organizational process of implementation described in the initial sections of this chapter.

4.7.3. Institutionalization of Project Excellence

Project Excellence was originally approved as a five-year project. After three years of implementation, the Project transformed virtually all aspects of the school: physical facilities; curriculum; teacher, student, and administrator roles; teaching methods; learning activities; evaluation methods; and the organization of the workday for all. On the surface, it is difficult to imagine things reverting back to a conventional form of education. Past research on educational change, however, has demonstrated that successful implementation does not necessarily ensure the long-term institutionalization or continuation of new programs and practices.

We attempted to assess the potential institutionalization of Project Excellence from case study findings during the third year of implementation. Our framework for analyzing institutionalization is adapted from the Huberman and Miles (1984) multi-site study of educational innovation in the United States. It defined institutionalization as "the presence of organizational conditions that signal *routinization* of the innovation... structures, procedures and organizational sentiments that were indicators of the innovation's being 'built in' to the school and district."

---

[4] The total number of teachers interviewed was 32. The data for a few teachers were insufficient to render a judgement. Those are listed as NA (no answer).

Huberman and Miles identified the following preconditions for successful institutionalization of educational changes:

> "...higher institutionalization is likely when there is *administrative pressure* to implement the program, no *serious resistance* (seen in low building endorsement or weak user commitment), and a reasonable degree of *teacher-administrator* harmony. If implementing the program results in some degree of *organizational transformation*, does not have serious *assistance* gaps, and ends with use by a fairly large *percentage of eligible* users who along with program leaders *remain* in the situation, then stronger institutionalization is likely."

All these preconditions are present in the organizational history of Project Excellence. The declining enrolment situation and opening of the separate school board high school provided a timely outlet for school personnel who were not committed to implementing the Project, thus averting the potential for "serious resistance" among staff. In terms of these conditions, one would predict that Project Excellence has a strong likelihood of achieving a high degree of institutionalization.

Huberman and Miles analyzed actual degree of institutionalization in terms of "supporting *conditions* related to current operations (such as whether competing practices had been eliminated)...the completion of important *passages* (such as moving from soft to hard money, or getting the use of the practice written into job descriptions)... and the survival of the innovation through several organizational *cycles* (...a school semester or year and including movement through new budgets and personnel)." Table 4-9 lists Huberman and Miles's indicators of institutionalization and assesses the presence or absence of these conditions for Project Excellence.

The analysis summarized in Table 4-9 indicates that while Project Excellence has achieved a fairly high degree of institutionalization, the continuance of the Project cannot be taken for granted at the present time.

Some key *supporting conditions* have not been fully achieved. Among teachers, the benefits of implementation are generally seen to outweigh the drawbacks (see chapters 5, 13, 14). There remains a substantial group of students, however, that denies or doubts the benefits of participation in the Project (see chapters 7, 13, 14). Only half the students and parents surveyed in our studies said they would choose Project Excellence over a traditional school at the present time (see chapter 14). Recommendations are made elsewhere in this report for responding to student and parent concerns about the Project, and for clarifying the long-range outcomes for students (e.g., requesting records of first year university and college performance of Project graduates).

Although Project Excellence is being implemented school-wide, competing practices have not been totally eliminated. There is continuing debate within the school concerning the frequency and function of "seminars", and whether seminars are being used and taught like regular classes by some teachers (see chapters 5 and 14). The uncertainty and lack of consensus within the Project concerning seminars needs to be resolved in order to establish what is and what is not legitimate within the principles and framework of Project Excellence. There is a sense in which the "seminar door" has replaced the "classroom door" beyond which individual teacher autonomy rules.

Equally serious is the existence of competing practices external to E.S.C.H.S., i.e., the board's high school in Iroquois Falls and Jeunesse Nord. Of course, these schools cannot be eliminated, but their presence as an escape valve threatens the long-term stability of the Project because of loss of clientele. This situation is likely to persist unless the situation changes from competing high schools to complementary high schools (see our recommendations, chapter 11).

In terms of *passage completion* and *cycle survival*, Project Excellence seems well on the road to institutionalization. One missing ingredient, however, is an organized induction and training program for new teachers. The Project has survived the departure of quite a few teachers as a result of continuing enrolment decline. At the beginning of year three, the first "new" teacher came on board. She left after a year to practice in a more conventional setting. It is to be expected that there will be a gradual turnover and replacement of existing staff. It took most of the original teachers a full two years with some training and extensive teacher-teacher collaboration to become comfortable with their teaching and teacher advisor roles. New teachers will need both initial and ongoing assistance in their first year with the Project, perhaps using a coaching or mentoring approach with experienced teachers.

Attention is also needed to the continuation and/or revision of existing courses assigned to new teachers. Up to the end of year three, most courses were being marked and revised by their orginal developers. As more staff leave, causing ongoing staffing adjustments within the Project, more and more courses will be taken over by other teachers.

Table 4-9

Status of Project Excellence Institutionalization

INDICATORS OF INSTITUTIONALIZATION	1987/88 STATUS
Supporting conditions	
Is a core (as vs. peripheral) application	present
Operating on a regular, daily basis	present
Provides benefits, payoffs to users	present for teachers, partially for students
Competing practices eliminated	partially
Receives support from:	
Administrators	present
Teachers	present
Clients (students, parents)	partially
Other: external funding, laws, etc.	present (OSIS)
Passage completion	
Goes from soft to hard money	present
Job descriptions become standard	present
Skills required are included in formal training program	absent
Organizational status is established/part of regulations	present
Routines established for supply & maintenance	present
Cycle survival	
Survives annual budget cycles	present
Survives departure or introduction of new personnel	present, future uncertain
Skills are taught in successive cycles	present
Achieves widespread use in organization	present
Survives equipment/materials turnover or loss	present

It should not be assumed that other teachers can take the developer's place with no more background than the student learning guides, particularly for courses with a number of built-in seminars. Further, there is no policy at present to deal with the possibility that a new teacher might want to develop an entirely new course to replace the existing one. Careful monitoring would be needed to avoid the same pitfalls of lengthy and unclear units developed in the early stages of the Project.

In the long term, we believe that the administration working with the department heads should organize a department-level approach to curriculum maintenance and revision, rather than a teacher-developer approach. That is, courses, once developed, should become the responsibility of the department rather than of individual teachers.

The recommendations that follow are suggested as possible means of improving the prospects for institutionalization of Project Excellence. In offering these suggestions, we are not necessarily advocating its continuance or its abandonment. That is a decision to be made locally within the school, school board, and community. If the choice is to continue, however, then there are certain actions that should be taken to maintain the Project.

4.7.4. Recommendations for Institutionalizing Project Excellence

(1) *Recommendation:* In order to facilitate continuation of the Project, we recommend that the school administration organize a staff committee to begin designing an in-house training program in anticipation of future new teachers.

(2) *Recommendation:* We further recommend that the Ministry of Education provide financial support for the development of a teacher training program for Project Excellence at E.S.C.H.S. Such training could be made available to selected teachers from schools that adopt programs similar to Project Excellence.

(3) *Recommendation:* The administration working with the department heads should organize a department level approach to curriculum maintenance/revision, rather than a teacher-developer approach.

(4) *Recommendation:* The administration working with the department heads and teachers should continue discussion about the frequency, function, and content of seminars with the intent of clarifying what is and what is not legitimate in terms of Project goals and design. Seminars are part of the courses, and should not persist as a "hidden curriculum".

PART C: ROLES IN PROJECT EXCELLENCE

CHAPTER 5

THE TEACHER ROLE IN PROJECT EXCELLENCE

This chapter examines the role of the teacher in Project Excellence. Teacher behaviours during the third year of implementation are evaluated in terms of the ideal expected behaviours described in chapter 3. The nature of the change for teachers from past practice is also described. Teacher attitudes, concerns, and recommendations about the Project are reviewed in chapter 14.

5.1. DESIGN FOR EVALUATION OF TEACHER IMPLEMENTATION

The basis for evaluating the status of teacher implementation of their role in Project Excellence is the Project Excellence Checklist. This was developed and validated through preliminary interviews with school administrators, a sample of teachers (17), and written materials describing the Project. Development of the checklist involved identification of (1) the major components of Project Excellence (e.g. teacher behaviours), (2) the variations in use that occur, and (3) the ideal patterns of practice. Appendix D shows the complete checklist with ideal teacher behaviours marked (*) listed under variation 1. Other variations represent alternative practices in use in the school.

A teacher interview to measure current implementation status was developed from the checklist. All teachers (N=32)[5] were interviewed during January and February 1988 about what they do as subject teachers and teacher advisors. The Status of Implementation Interviews were supplemented by observations in resource centres and teacher advisor groups during the 1987/88 school year.

For this analysis, teacher responses and observation data are measured against Project ideals as stated in the Project Excellence Checklist. Where no ideal practices were stated, the patterns of variation are simply summarized as found. Appendix D presents the Project Excellence Checklist. Appendix E presents a quantitative summary of the variations in teacher behaviours compiled through interviews with individual teachers. Here, we summarize the variations in practice recorded for each component of the teacher role, and assess teacher behaviours in terms of expected behaviours. Findings for the TA role are presented first, followed by findings for the subject teacher role.

---

[5] The two vice-principals were not included in this sample although both teach some courses.

5.2. TEACHER ADVISOR ROLE IMPLEMENTATION

5.2.1. Teacher Advisor Role Findings

1. **Teacher checks attendance three times a day plus conducts spot checks.** The majority of teachers conduct spot checks for all or some of their students in addition to regular attendance (ideal). Teachers who did not conduct spot checks said that they did not have time or did not find it useful. Those who did conduct spot checks, did it in a number of different ways, some weekly, some daily (for some students), some on a random basis. In conducting spot checks they mainly looked for what students were working on or if they were where they said they would be.

2. **TA holds scheduled interviews in two-week period.** Half the faculty (17/32) are *not* holding regularly scheduled interviews with all students every two weeks, which would be the ideal. Of those who are not, seven are holding interviews within a one-month period, and two with only some students. The rest are holding interviews when the need arises, or as they can catch students with no formal schedule. Some faculty consider the daily checks of student work they do in their TA meetings a substitute for the interview. Of those who conduct interviews within a two-week period, some do it weekly. Given the importance of this component, the fact that only half the faculty are within the ideal, would make this an unacceptable response given project goals.

3. **Students develop timetable with the help of TA.** Twenty-six out of 32 teachers are allowing students to develop and complete their own timetable in some form. The distinction between variations one and two (completes with advice of TA versus TA steps in to develop and monitor as needed) is subtle and may reflect the needs of students in their individual TA groups. Younger students, new students, and students with special needs may require more assistance. Variation one, the ideal, places the responsibility on the student more than variation two. The data indicate that teachers are allowing students that responsibility, though some are more active in intervening than others.

4. **TA counsels and provides guidance in course selection.** The majority of teachers are counselling and providing guidance to students in their course selection (ideal). TAs have become the front line for advising on options for course selection, with the guidance department in a more consultative role. Most teachers indicated in the interviews that student and parents make the initial decisions.

5. **TA checks unit production frequently.** The minimum requirement for teachers is that they summarize student effort in preparation for bi-weekly meetings with vice-principals to review the progress of students in general. All but two (N/A)

are meeting that requirement. All teachers record student 'green slips' indicating completion of units and can get a sense of student progress from this daily record. This is the basis of the bi-weekly summary sheet. Some teachers informally check with students in the TA groups on a daily or weekly basis to keep track of unit progress. Checking with students and the bi-weekly summary sheet provide TAs with information that can be used to diagnose problems, in interviews, and in developing timetables for student work (components 2,3,6,7). Thus, this behaviour is interwoven with other activities.

6. **TA keeps record of student progress.** As noted above, TAs are required to keep a record of student progress. Variations one (ideal) and two are similar, with two placing more emphasis on students to keep records of their own work as well, often providing them with tools (charts, planning devices) to do so. Of the 32 teachers interviewed, 23 fell into these two variations. At one point in time, public records of progress became popular as a motivational device (variation three, four), but this has now fallen off in use. Many teachers considered review of the tools they provide to students to be an adequate indicator of student progress. They often used these tools as an easy reference for brief discussions with students.

7. **TA negotiates controls with student.** The issue in component seven is whether the TA negotiates controls with the student (variation one, ideal), or sets the control for the student. Half the faculty said they negotiated with the student. Four said that they generally set the controls. Seven teachers said they do both.

8. **TA informs parents in prescribing controls.** The ideal (variation one) is for teachers to consult parents about controls. TAs themselves agree that controls are more successful when parents are involved. Clearly, parents are informed or consulted in more extreme cases. Beyond that, however, it appears that TAs make a personal decision to involve parents on a case-by-case basis, given the student, the severity of the case, and the response of parents to prior phone contacts. Some TAs had regular contact with parents, others did not (see phone calls, component 12).

9. **TA uses a variety of controls.** About a third of the teachers (13/32) said that they used a number of different strategies in working with controls -- most commonly giving a warning, setting short-term unit goals or using a timetable tool, having the student work in their centre, or requiring daily progress reports. Eight said that they used only a small number of control options. Those in the middle seem to have found a few strategies that they prefer due to success in the past and use those strategies frequently. A subset of teachers has become increasingly frustrated in their ability to find controls that work in motivating students. As a result, they have increasingly reduced the frequency and variety of controls they use.

10. **TA sets controls within a reasonable time frame.** The majority of teachers said that they wait a few days to see if a problem is resolved before setting controls.

They usually discuss the problem with the student and give the student some time to work on it before taking stronger steps.

11. **TA consults with other staff to solve problems.** Of the 32 teachers interviewed, 13 seek out other staff regularly to diagnose and solve problems for students (ideal). Ten said they would do it only if they were unable to solve it themselves. The bi-weekly VP/TA meetings provide a regular forum for discussing problems, though not all teachers have sought advice in these meetings. Staff members said that the requirements of being a TA generally meant that they were constantly talking about students to other staff members in the staff room or halls.

12. **TA contacts parents by phone once a month.** TAs felt that this was a difficult part of their job. Many said that they were not comfortable calling parents in general, though they could see the positive benefits of it. Some teachers had asked parents about frequency and method of contact, and, as a result, either contacted them in writing or on a less frequent basis. Twenty-one of 32 TAs say they contact parents at least once a month by phone (ideal). Parent survey data do not entirely support the reported frequency of contact -- 50% of parents completing the survey reported no regular contact. As phone calls are the major way that the school communicates with parents, and as they are the basis for building a relationship with parents, teacher behaviour related to this item could be improved.

13. **TA involves students in group activities.** Few TAs regularly involved their TA group in whole-group activities related to team building (ideal), though all encouraged their group to get involved in school-sponsored activities. Ten of the 32 teachers stated that they occasionally involved their group in activities. Reasons given for few TA group activities included student reluctance, lack of time, low priority given other demands and not a cohesive group given age and interests. The highest frequency of TA group activities (variation one) mentioned was four times a year. (This question was omitted in 13 interviews).

5.2.2. Discussion of Teacher Advisor Role Findings

Our findings indicate that the teacher advisor role was, for a majority of teachers, being implemented as expected during the third year of Project Excellence. This overall finding supports earlier judgements regarding the effectiveness of the assistance and problem solving process used to support implementation.

Our analysis does point to four important areas of teacher advisor work where improvement, and perhaps renewed commitment, is needed. These four are:

1. **regularly scheduled interviews with students** (component 2);
2. **use of a variety of controls with students in difficulty** (component 9);

3. **regular contact with parents** (component 12); and
4. **involvement of parents in setting controls** (component 8).

For each of these components, a substantial subset of teachers (30% to 60%) has settled into routine patterns of practice which we would characterize as minimally acceptable in light of Project goals and expectations.

Our knowledge of the history of the Project (chapter 4) suggests that teacher advisors as a group were performing closer to the Project ideals in earlier stages of the Project in the above four areas. It is our observation that some teachers have become less rigorous in their observance of these expectations over time.

Interviews with students. Some teachers believe they have enough informal contact with students to keep abreast of their progress, or that monthly as opposed to bi-weekly meetings are sufficient. The rate of credit accumulation by many students in Project Excellence, however, does not measure up to Project or ministry expectations (see chapter 11). Furthermore, the TA student interviews are a unique response to OSIS statements that provisions be made for each student to relate to a teacher who can act as an advisor (Section 1.5). Any backsliding on those provisions diminishes the special benefits of this system of education over others.

Use of controls. In terms of the variety of controls used, we recognize that organizational constraints limit the variety of controls available to some teachers. We further recognize that over time, teachers have abandoned some control options which have not proven successful with their students. That said, we still find that there are teachers in the school who appear to have lost or to be losing their sense of efficacy. By sense of efficacy, we mean their perception of their ability to motivate and find ways to help students in difficulty to do better.

We believe that further in-service help for TAs in counseling students, communicating with parents, and structuring ways of helping students in difficulty is needed for this group of teachers to regain their belief in their own ability to make the Project work for students.

Parent contact and involvement. The TA role provides the link between the school, the student and the parent. The opportunities for teachers and parents to share responsibility for students' education in Project Excellence (OSIS, section 1.1) go beyond those provided in conventional high schools. The Project design provides for more sharing of information between the school and home about student performance and situations outside the school affecting the student's life. It also calls for more involvement of parents in decisions about the progress of their child's education. Communication between the TA and the parent, as shown in these data and the parent survey, is weaker than it might be for a substantial number of teachers at E.S.C.H.S.

This is most apparent in the frequency of contact with parents. Some TAs only call parents who ask to be contacted on a regular basis, or in crisis situations concerning their son or daughter's performance at school. It is also apparent in the frustration some TAs express with their ability to move beyond informing parents of student progress to actually getting parents involved in decisions about student work at school and home.

The TA-parent relationship is one of the lynchpins of Project Excellence. Given continuing concerns about the rate of student progress in Project Excellence (chapter 11), the fact that a substantial number of parents say they are not contacted on a regular basis (chapter 8), and continued dissatisfaction with the Project on the part of many parents (chapter 14), we believe the TAs at E.S.C.H.S. cannot afford to loosen their efforts to maintain regular contact with parents, and to involve parents as active participants in decision-making about their children's schooling (see also, chapter 8 recommendations).

5.2.3. Recommendations for the Teacher Advisor Role

(5) *Recommendation:* Given the importance of the TA's regular communication with the student, and the fact that many students are not accumulating credits at a satisfactory rate to complete high school in the desired time (see chapter 11), we recommend that the administration require teacher advisors to declare how they are organizing their scheduled interviews, and that the administration monitor compliance with these schedules.

(6) *Recommendation:* Many TAs are experiencing frustration and a diminished sense of efficacy in their ability to motivate students and set effective controls. The current VP/TA meetings are apparently not satisfying the need of some teachers for more information about ways to work with controls and student motivation. We suggest that the administration (1) organize opportunities for TAs in the school to share strategies and tactics related to controls and motivating students (as during the beginning implementation of the Project); (2) expand

contact with other schools with a TA-like system to see what they do to motivate students or work with controls; (3) enquire further into possible sources of assistance outside of education, such as the social workers who helped teachers with their interviewing skills during year two of the Project (chapter 4).

(7) *Recommendation:* Project Excellence cannot succeed unless students take an active role in their education. To date, student perceptions have not been tapped as a resource for ideas of effective ways of motivating and assisting students. We recommend that an ad hoc committee of students and TAs be created through the student council to discuss different ways of motivating and assisting students within the Project, and to develop recommendations for the TAs reflecting the student perspective.

(8) *Recommendation:* As many TAs are still having difficulty involving parents in controls, or feel reluctant to do so, we suggest that TAs be given organized opportunities to discuss among themselves instances of effective parent involvement in setting controls and motivating students. A possible outcome of such discussions might be a handbook or suggested guidelines for TA contacts with parents. These could suggest topics for telephone conversations and written communications, ways of responding to parent disinterest or hostility, and ways to use parents as a resource, such as asking them about their successes with their child or involving them in what is happening at the school.

(9) *Recommendation:* Inasmuch as regular TA contacts with parents are essential to the success of Project Excellence, we recommend that the administration make a policy statement reinforcing this expectation.

5.3. SUBJECT TEACHER ROLE IMPLEMENTATION

5.3.1. Subject Teacher Role Findings

14. **Teachers assist students in any subject during any time available.** The majority of teachers said that they assist students with any subject matter problems at any time of the day (ideal), even if not in their area of subject expertise. A few teachers limit the time to when they are in centres, or only in their area of expertise. Teachers feel this is an important aspect of their role because students are often shy about approaching other staff; other subject teachers might be busy; and students need immediate help in order to move on with their work.

15. **Teacher responds to student need for contact.** This component examines teacher contact with students in the resource centres. The ideal (variation 1) has teachers available to students, with students taking responsibility for asking questions. Only 8/32 stated that this was normally the case. The majority, 20/32, state that they circulate in the centres to check with students and solicit questions about work. In doing so, they are also available for student-initiated questions. Teachers felt that circulating allowed them to keep a better eye on centre discipline and to encourage students who might be shy of asking questions. Teachers are less likely to circulate when they have a heavy marking load, or when students are lined up to discuss specific problems, as

in mathematics or science.

16. **Types of seminars held by teachers.** This component presents the kinds of seminars teachers offer to students in their courses. It should be viewed with components 17 and 18 as all relate to seminars. The majority of teachers hold seminars for direct teaching or demonstration (variations 3, 4, 5), though some use them for student discussion and presentations.

17. **Teacher basis for scheduling seminars.** The basis for scheduling seminars is presented in this component. The majority of teachers, 17/32, (variations 4,5) write seminar sessions into their unit descriptions, based on teacher desire for directed learning activities or previously observed needs for group instruction. Twelve of the 32 teachers schedule seminars on an "as needs arise" or one-to-one basis. Scheduled small group seminars are less common in practical subjects, where teachers are more prone to hold on-the-spot discussions or demonstrations when students reach certain units, or present particular problems. These may be one-on-one or involve a few other students more or less at the same point.

18. **Seminar incentives.** As students schedule their own work, some teachers provide incentives to encourage students to make time to participate in seminars. This is mostly true in the case of optional seminars. Incentives include such things as participation credits, unit credits, and test review. Half the faculty, 16/32, said that seminar attendance was mandatory and that they seldom provided incentives. Students had to attend to complete the unit.

19. **Teacher is currently working on curriculum.** The majority of teachers, 24/32, said that they were in the process of developing or revising curriculum. Five teachers of 32 said they had plans to do so in the near future. Developing and revising curriculum is an ongoing need with the introduction of new ministry guidelines and updating materials.

20. **Teacher use of time for curriculum work.** The ideal, as listed in the Project Excellence Handbook, is that teachers spend one to one and one-half hours a day working on curriculum. Only 6/32 teachers said that they work on curriculum at school on a regular basis (variation 1, ideal). Half the faculty, 17/32, said that they work mainly at home or at school with no set schedule. Teachers state that they often have difficulty finding the time to work on curriculum, and give priority to working with students during school hours. Given the response to component 19, i.e., that most are currently working on curriculum in some way, finding the time for curriculum work often represents a significant addition to their school work.

21. **Teacher includes a variety of media in curriculum.** Teachers are encouraged to include a variety of media in writing their course units, in order to address the learning needs of different students. Thirteen of 32 teachers said that they included a large variety of media, including audio-visual tapes, audio-tapes, hands-on work, computer software, written assignments, and oral presentations as appropriate to the subject. Eleven said that they included two or three different media. Choice of media in course units seems to be a matter of

subject needs and teacher comfort. Some teachers have begun to make video-tapes of "classroom-like" instruction as one option; others have had difficulty presenting themselves on tape and looked to other solutions.

22. **Types of unit tests used by teachers**. Teachers are also encouraged to use a variety of types of tests in unit completion -- oral, written, and practical. Choice of type of test seems influenced by subject needs, and is largely written. Teachers, however, are using all three modes, or stated they have and would be willing to change a test to another mode if student needs so indicate.

23. **Grading practices**. Grading practices for tests are set largely by the department. Teachers may calculate test grades on the basis of the highest mark, an average of marks, or other factors. As this is a mastery system, students can take more than one test or trial, though usually it is limited to two. Teacher approach to grading is varied. Responses show a slight tendency to take the highest mark for retests.

24. **Marking and recording grades**. Marking represents another significant workload for teachers. All teachers mark the course units they have written and occasionally mark another's units. There is more variety in who records the marks. Thirteen of 32 teachers record their own marks. These teachers feel that they keep better track of students when they do their own marks. In other cases, the RCA for the centre records the marks.

25. **Marking schedule**. The time and place for marking also is a consideration for teachers. As with working on curriculum, half said most of their marking is done at home and at school with no set schedule. Teachers mark in centres as necessary or in office hours where students may interrupt them with questions. Because of these interruptions, some teachers said that they preferred to work at home. Only three said they completed their marking during their school office hours. Marking load also varies with the subject area, depending on the number of courses a teacher is responsible for and how many students are enrolled.

26. **Teacher quickness of marking and return**. Students need to know as quickly as possible that they have mastered a unit and can move on (this is often an incentive to them). Teachers ideally mark unit tests and return marks to students the day after assignments are completed (variation 1, ideal). Half the faculty said they do this, even if it means working extra hours. Of the remaining half, 11/16 said they return them as soon as possible and have time goals, usually by the end of the week, to do so. Overall, teachers appear to be very conscientious about keeping up with marking.

5.3.2. Discussion of Subject Teacher Role Findings

Based on our findings, we conclude that E.S.C.H.S. teachers are generally conforming to expected role behaviours of subject teachers in Project Excellence. Our analysis does point, however, to a *need for clarification of Project expectations related to teacher-student contact in resource centres (component 15) and the frequency and function of seminars (components 16-18)*. It also points to *time management difficulties related to marking and curriculum development* (components 19, 20, 24-26).

Teacher-student contact. Ideally, students in Project Excellence take responsibility for going to teachers for help as the need arises. Practically, teachers have found that many students are reluctant to initiate contact with teachers. As a result, many teachers actively circulate and solicit student questions in the resource centres, rather than passively waiting for students to take the initiative. We believe this is an appropriate response on the part of teachers, and that the potential benefits override possible concerns about taking responsibility away from students. Teachers circulating in the centres to check what students are doing and to offer assistance seems an effective means of keeping students on task (see recommendations re student role, chapter 7), as well as making teacher assistance more available to students.

Seminars. During the year of our study, the topic of seminars was debated in department meetings and heads' meetings. No consensus was reached on the ideal purpose and frequency. As stated earlier, there is a sense in which the seminar door has replaced the classroom door, beyond which individual teacher discretion reigns.

We agree that there seems to be no justified reason for insisting on a single model for seminars. The needs for small-group instruction are simply too varied from subject to subject. We do believe, however, that more clarity is needed regarding the boundaries of appropriate seminar practice within Project Excellence. Seminars are a source of contention in the school, due to real or perceived scheduling conflicts, rumours that some teachers are holding frequent seminars like traditional classes, and parent support for a return to more structured group learning in some subject areas, e.g., mathematics. We suggest that further policy direction regarding seminars, their frequency and function, is needed at both the school and department levels. The aura of uncertainty and taboo about seminars needs to be lifted, so that efforts to improve methods of small-group instruction can be pursued more openly.

Curriculum development and marking. The time management issues surrounding curriculum development and marking are closely related. The problem has two dimensions, individual teacher workload and workload distribution across the staff.

In terms of the individual teacher, it appears that the official allocation of one and a half hours per day for curriculum development has little relation to the reality of teacher practice. Although a majority of teachers said they were working on or had plans to work on curriculum revisions, they are unable to do this on a regular basis during the normal workday. One must ask, then, how the time for curriculum development is being spent, if not for curriculum work. Our observations suggest several contributing factors, including:

(1) teachers giving priority to helping students;

(2) teachers needing curriculum time to keep up with marking;

(3) teachers scheduling more than one seminar a day (officially they have 45 minutes a day for small group activities); and

(4) teachers performing additional duties, e.g. co-operative education, coaching, and other co-instructional activities.

Marking appears to be a major "consumer" of curriculum development time. Marking time is not officially built into the teacher workday, yet the marking load for teachers has dramatically increased in Project Excellence. Teachers can use some of their resource centre time for marking, but they must give priority during that time to helping students. Many teachers are also spending time recording marks. This was supposed to be a resource centre assistant duty. In practice, many teachers do not feel comfortable turning over record keeping to someone else.

Because of the increased marking load, we believe that official recognition of the need for marking time is warranted. This will not gain any time for teachers though it will legitimize the allocation of time for marking and record keeping.

We also believe that the need for an hour and a half per day curriculum time needs to be officially reconsidered at this point in the Project history. There is no doubt that substantial in-school time was needed for initial curriculum writing and revision during the first two years of the Project. As of year three, however, most teachers were really in a refining phase of curriculum development. The release of new ministry guidelines has temporarily increased the workload for some teachers.

We believe it is important to maintain ongoing curriculum improvement as part of the Project structure. Given the wide variation in teacher plans for curriculum work at this stage of the Project, and in teacher preferences for organizing their curriculum work, we believe it might be more efficient for the administration to negotiate an appropriate amount of time and schedule for using that time with each teacher each year. Overall, we believe the administration needs to investigate teacher time use outside the resource centres and restructure the official workday to accommodate the realities of Project implementation.

Our findings also indicate that marking and curriculum work is not evenly distributed across the school, despite early predictions from the administration that past teacher workload inequities would disappear. As in any school, some subjects have a heavier load because of higher course enrolment, and some teachers teach fewer courses due to non-teaching responsibilities or lack of additional subject qualifications. This situation has created some resentment within the teaching staff.

We do not have a specific recommendation to offer regarding workload distribution, as this is a matter best dealt with through collective bargaining. We do believe it is important for other schools considering adopting this model of education to be aware that workload inequities did not even out as anticipated at E.S.C.H.S. This circumstance may be more a function of staffing than of the project structure.

5.3.3. Recommendations for the Subject Teacher Role

(10) *Recommendation:* We recommend that the administration take steps with the staff to develop a policy regarding seminars, their frequency and functions. School and department expectations concerning seminars should be clarified.

(11) *Recommendation:* We recommend that the administration investigate teacher time use outside the resource centres, and restructure the official workday to accommodate the realities of Project implementation. Particular attention is needed concerning time allocation for curriculum work, marking, and duties beyond those associated with the normal TA and teacher roles.

5.4. CHANGES IN TEACHER ROLE

Implementing Project Excellence required substantial changes in teacher practice. To get a picture of those changes, we conducted in-depth interviews with 15 of the 33 teachers in the school (Teacher Change Process Interview). The teachers selected for these interviews were all regular teachers or minor department heads, and included staff from all subject areas and both languages.

We asked teachers how their role had changed from what it was before Project

Excellence in terms of teaching, advising students, developing curriculum, consulting parents, and interacting with colleagues. The following excerpts from our interviews illustrate the kinds of changes for teachers described in each of the areas indicated. The chapter concludes with a summary description of what teachers regarded as "the most difficult thing to change".

5.4.1. Changes in Teaching Practice

The major changes in *teaching* relate to grouping, timing and pacing of instruction, level of instruction, methodologies, interaction with students, preparation, marking, and discipline.

GROUPING

Teachers spend more time teaching individual students than groups

> "You're working with students on an individual basis."
>
> "My role is less group and more one-to-one or two-to-one. It's a comfortable number."

TIMING AND PACING OF INSTRUCTION

Teachers must be ready to teach any part of their courses at all times

> "You could be working on filing with one student for ten minutes and then jump to letter set-up with another. You could be teaching all the different areas in your course within the span of a week. Before, you prepared for one specific area for that time slot and then you taught everyone the same thing."

Content coverage is fixed rather than variable for students

> "Every year you might end the course in a different place depending on how much time you spent with certain units, or certain kids, or what the level of the group was. Now the kid is expected to go through a certain quantity and the time is up to them."

LEVEL OF INSTRUCTION

Teaching is oriented to individual students rather than class norms

> "In the classroom, I think I was teaching to the lowest common denominator. There were few opportunities for me as a teacher to deal with individuals. Seldom would I adjust the work to the individual."
>
> "I think before, you were talking to a group of students and you were teaching to a group of students. I think now it's become more personalized. Certainly after a while you got to know each student in your classroom, but you certainly never gave them the attention that we are giving them now, where you can go on them one-on-one."

TEACHING METHODS

Oral instruction has become supplementary to written instruction

> "It's changed dramatically in terms of instruction. It's changed from what was primarily oral instruction to written instruction. You are no longer the dominant force in the classroom. You've become secondary to the unit guides."

Direct instruction has become supplementary to independent learning

> "I have a lot of different things going on in the centre at once. Their units tell them what to do...When they need help they come to you. They've done the background reading and you can tell them what they need to know in five or ten minutes instead of taking a 30-minute class."

Teachers adjust instruction to the needs of individual students more easily than in the classroom

> "Being able to relate to a student, you may change your style of teaching to that particular student because of what you know about him. When you're up in front of the class, you just did your thing and that was it."

Teachers are able to provide more in-depth instruction

> "...changements au niveau des concepts que j'avais de la difficulté dans l'enseignement à passer. Je peux m'asseoir avec un étudiant et lui expliquer."

INTERACTION WITH STUDENTS

Teachers have a less adversarial relationship with students

> "There's not that adversarial part of a teacher and a student...The idea of a teacher more as a coach style of teaching is maybe a better way to put it...A coach has to be a little closer and friendly but still firm. There's that part in the teaching role now."

Teachers have more individual contact with and knowledge of students

> "I find that I know more background on the student...what he's doing and how he's doing at home and things like that. You talk to students a lot more than you did in the other."

> "In terms of the quieter students, a lot of them were just hidden. Any student that was in trouble I never had any contact with them in the classroom. In this system, I do have more one-on-one contact with students. I had no time in the classroom to get to those individual students."

Teaching is less affected by group dynamics in the classroom

> "In terms of discussion in the classroom...often lively discussions...but at the same time always dominated by one to three people in the classroom. And I would never have an opportunity to discuss or even to encourage the quieter students to initiate comments."

Teachers get asked for help in courses taught by other teachers

> "In the other system we were teaching our own areas. We weren't helping students with other areas. In this system you help wherever you can."

PREPARATION

Teachers have little daily lesson planning once units are developed

> "La préparation est beaucoup plus facile qu'avant parce que les modules sont faits maintenant."

> "Once your curriculum is written, then there's no more preparation unless you're revising curriculum or writing new courses."

MARKING

The marking load has increased

> "I think the marking has probably increased by 100 per cent. I know I'm spending twice as much time marking as before. I didn't have to do marking at home before."

Teachers have less control over the quantity and time of marking

> "I had more ability than I do now to control the quantity of the marking and the time of the marking. I don't have that flow control in this system as much."

DISCIPLINE

Teachers spend less time dealing with classroom management issues

> "As a teacher, my role as a disciplinarian has been reduced significantly. Teaching was always secondary to control of the class, 'cause you couldn't teach if you couldn't control. You spent an awful lot of time just thinking of disciplinary strategies rather than teaching. And that's changed. Discipline has become secondary in the centres."

> "There are no confrontations at all. Really there's no student giving you a hard time. It's more in the centre talking and you just say please come back another day and that's it. The atmosphere has changed."

5.4.2. Changes in Advising Students

Relative to the traditional school, all the teachers interviewed reported a large increase in academic advising (course selection, career plans) of students, and counselling about personal situations affecting their schoolwork. They saw no equivalence between the TA role and their former home-room teacher role.

Teachers are responsible for advising specific groups of students

> "I think that role for me in the past was minimal. I would have been limited to a very small number of students, probably ones who were involved in clubs. Maybe an occasional advanced level student would come and talk to me about his or her courses. I don't feel I did any substantial personal counseling and hardly any academic counselling."

Teacher advisors do academic and personal counselling formerly handled by the Guidance Department

> "With guidance...this is one area where we've had enormous growth...perhaps good for the students and parents involved in that the TAs put in more time working with these option sheets...but certainly it's a drain on the TA. I would say a lot of us are wondering, 'What is Guidance doing now'." (Teacher)

> "On a perdu notre clientèle comme orienteur. Ce sont les conseillers qui ont pris la relève. On hésite donc souvent à aller voir les élèves, parce qu'on se dit qu'il y a déjà un prof qui s'en occupe." (Guidance counselor)

Home room teachers had no advising and counselling responsibilities

> "As a home-room teacher it was just attendance check. They checked in with you and out. There were announcements over the PA. And that was about it."

> "Come titulaire de classe, je prenais les présences, j'écoutais les nouvelles et c'était tout. Pas de contact personnel avec le jeune. Maintenant, la relation avec l'élève est plus proche, tu connais le jeune et ses problèmes. Tu essaies de le faire évoluer."

5.4.3. Changes in Curriculum Development Work

Most teachers reported that they were spending more time working on curriculum, developing curriculum in greater detail, making more use of curriculum guidelines, and giving more consideration to student learning time than before Project Excellence. The change in curriculum format was less for some teachers of basic and technical courses who were already using unit based curriculum materials.

Teachers spend more time working on curriculum

> "Even though I wrote curriculum before, it was never high profile. Now you are always thinking curriculum. You're constantly revising. I don't really see much comparison between what we did then and what we do now. Before, you might deal with curriculum at an occasional department meeting. Now it is part of our lives, just like teaching."

Teachers make greater use of curriculum guidelines

> "J'ai appris beaucoup au niveau de la planification du curriculum. Dans l'enseignement traditionnel, les enseignants ne regardent pratiquement pas le programme cadre tandis qu'ici il faut le connaître à fond."

> "Certainly we have more opportunity to build directly on the curriculum guidelines that are given to us by the ministry 'cause we have to use them as resources in developing our units."

Teachers develop a more detailed and varied curriculum

> "I think there's a lot more thought going into the original preparation of the unit. In my old daily plans you wouldn't very often see objectives stated anywhere...Maybe when you were making up a course outline, but not necessarily in terms of day-to-day lesson plans...But with the units every unit has objectives, so there's a lot more thought that goes into the planning."

> "Normally in the other system it was sort of a preparation. You drew up your course of study but you didn't go into it in great detail. And you sort of taught it as you came to it. Now it's not an outline for me. It's an outline for students, which makes a big difference."

> "Beaucoup de changements...mes démonstrations sont toutes sur vidéo. Ça m'a forcée à être plus concrète, plus systématique, plus réaliste, plus visuelle."

Teachers think more about the time required to complete assignments

> "The other major difference is that we spend a lot more time trying to calculate how long it's going to take them. Whereas in the classroom, you just said read this for homework and bring it back next class. Now we have to say well how long will this take the student. Does this unit take the amount of time that it's supposed to?"

5.4.4. Changes in Communication with Parents

The teachers all spoke of major change in their relationships with parents. Contact with parents is more frequent (not limited to parent interview nights), at teacher initiative (rather than parent or front office), not limited to parents of "good students", and more personal.

The increased contact, however, is limited to parents of the teacher advisor's group of students.

Teacher contact with parents is more frequent and initiated by teacher advisors, not by the front office or parents

> "In the old system I would very seldom contact a parent, not even for discipline."
>
> "The VPs would do that. I can't think of a situation where I did contact a parent in the old system. On parent interview nights, the parents elected to see you. In this system, I contact parents on a regular basis."
>
> "When I was in the classroom, I had minimal contact with parents. Any parental contact was initiated by the parents through the main office. I would not initiate the contact, nor would they initiate the contact to me."

Parents communicate with teacher advisors, not with subject teachers

> "On Parents' Night now, parents come in to see you as their kid's TA. They don't come to see you as their kid's subject teacher anymore."
>
> "In the old system, you'd have the parents of all kinds of kids coming in for all of your courses, and you wouldn't necessarily know that kid very well....Now it's a different sort of problem...You tend to know the kid well, but not all of the subjects that they are taking because they are not in your area of expertise."

Teachers have more contact with parents of students who are not succeeding in school

> "Le rapport a changé. Il y a un contact avec les parents de bons élèves, et même avec les parents de mauvais élèves. Ils savent ce qui se passe."
>
> "Significantly increased. Before, it was catch and miss... On Parents' Nights I might ask a couple of students' parents to come in. And inevitably the ones I wanted to see never came in. The ones that you didn't really need to see came in."

Teacher contact with parents is more direct and personal

> "Sometimes I would attempt to initiate contact by writing a note on the report card...Please arrange to come see me... I would be very reluctant to phone. Under this system I think I have frequent and very productive wide-ranging opportunities to work with parents."
>
> "Quand il y a un problème, tu vas chercher de l'information et c'est eux qui te la donnent. Avant on n'avait pas cette approche-là."
>
> "I would tell them why I thought the student was getting the mark he or she was

> getting and how I thought they could improve it or how I was pleased. The discussion with parents was always very limited...very impersonal. Now it's very different. We become involved with the parents' difficulties with the child and we tend to share them. There's a much more intimate knowledge of the family, and we meet and speak with them much more frequently."

5.4.5. Changes in Relationship with Colleagues

Teachers spoke of an overall change towards increased communication and collegiality among teachers focussed on student performance and curriculum improvement.

Teachers talk more together about ways of improving student performance and curriculum

> "Now you tend to work as a TA and you go to the subject teacher where a kid's having a problem. Or as a teacher their student is having trouble in your class and you go to them and try to get some problems straightened out. The emphasis is on how to help that kid, and that I like."

> "In the past, I wouldn't be talking to staff about students or school work. It would be just a personal basis."

> "You talk to staff about their subjects, where you didn't before."

> "Il y a un peu plus de coopération qu'avant. Il y a plus d'attente au niveau de la section en ce qui concerne la préparation des modules. Avant on était plus indépendant."

> "People are trying to pick up what other people are doing well. And so there is that kind of help available from other colleagues that I don't think was available before."

Teachers are less isolated from each other

> "I think there's more contact now, whereas before you taught your classes and you were in your own little world. Now you are moving around and you are seeing other teachers and you are talking to other teachers."

> "As a teacher in the department, I worked in isolation to a large extent. Every now and then I'd pull out handouts from a teacher, but we basically worked in isolation. I find now we have more opportunity to co-ordinate our work."

5.5. THE DIFFICULTY OF THE CHANGE

There is no question that implementation of Project Excellence required significant changes for teachers in their roles as instructors, curriculum developers, advisors, and colleagues. We asked teachers to pinpoint the most difficult change for them personally.

Their responses clustered around five major themes: (1) communication with students and parents as a teacher advisor; (2) time management; (3) developing curriculum; (4) managing resource centres; and (5) loss of previous teaching and program routines.

The most commonly mentioned major difficulty for teachers was learning to interview and interact with students in their teacher advisor role. Numerous teachers also commented on initial difficulties communicating with parents as teacher advisors. The problem had less to do with contacting parents than with the fact that so many parents were confused and hostile about Project Excellence initially. Teachers found it stressful having to deal with parent concerns about the Project when they themselves were not yet certain of its structure and efficacy.

Project Excellence reorganized the nature and schedule of teachers' work in the school. Many teachers experienced major difficulties learning how to organize their time to get their work done. Problems centred particularly around the need for curriculum development time. This was most acute during the first year of the Project, as most teachers were still developing their original courses when the Project got under way.

Many teachers found the task of writing units and tests for student learning guides a real challenge. They had few models to draw on. Such things as writing clear instructions to students, providing a variety of learning activities, and applying a mastery learning approach to curriculum content and student evaluation required a lot of thought, work, and ongoing revision.

Although mentioned with less frequency, some teachers found management of the resource centres the most difficult thing to change. The technical teachers had to figure out how to organize the shops so that students in any grade, level, and course could work on any unit at any time. A couple of teachers said they found it quite difficult learning to collaborate and compromise with other teachers in the centres on organization and classroom management. They were no longer the masters of their own classrooms.

The hardest thing for some teachers was giving up established teaching and program routines. The nature of the "loss" varied for different teachers, but it all came back to different beliefs about curriculum and instruction. Some missed teaching groups of students in a classroom setting, either because they enjoyed lecturing at the blackboard, or because they enjoyed the dynamics of classroom interaction. Some had difficulty accepting reductions in content coverage which were necessary when teachers found that the old curriculum was not "doable" in 20 five-to-six hour units. Others had difficulty accepting student control over the timing of instruction. Many teachers mentioned the difficulty of learning to interact with students in the teacher advisor role. The flip side of this coin was a substantial reduction in Guidance Department counselling contacts with students. The Guidance Department had difficulty reconciling this loss of clientele.

The difficulty was not just in mastering new functions or accepting the loss of old ones. As described by one teacher, one of the major challenges was to weather initial criticism (from teachers, students parents) and to give the system a chance to settle in. Some students took a year or more "to get down to work".

CHAPTER 6

ADMINISTRATIVE ROLES IN PROJECT EXCELLENCE

Chapter 6 describes the roles of department head, the principal, and vice-principals in Project Excellence, and analyzes the change in these roles from the previous system. Because the Project design does not prescribe expected behaviours of administrators, there is no evaluation of the administrator role in terms of expected performance. Administrator concerns about their roles and the Project as a whole are reviewed in chapter 14.

6.1. THE DEPARTMENT HEAD ROLE IN PROJECT EXCELLENCE

During the year of our study, there were 32 full-time teachers at E.S.C.H.S., plus the two vice-principals whose time was split between teaching and administration. Of the 32 teachers, 13 were department heads. There was no head of Français the year of our study (the francophone vice-principal was managing the department pending appointment of a new head). Eight departments were regarded as "major" departments based on the number of teachers assigned and course enrolments (Mathematics, English, Français, History/Geography, Commercial, Science, Technical, Physical Education). Six were referred to as "minor" departments with only one or two teachers (Music, Art, Family Studies, Guidance, Library, Basic/Special Education). To get a picture of the department head role, we interviewed seven of these teachers specifically about their role and the changes in their role as heads.

6.1.1. Duties of the Department Head

Department heads in Project Excellence have responsibilities for teaching and advising, as well as responsibilities specific to the role of head. As heads, they are primarily responsible for the allocation of courses, co-ordinating curriculum development, timetabling teachers in the department resource centres, covering for absent teachers in the centres, supervising resource centre assistants (RCAs), managing budget and supplies, monitoring student work and outcomes in the department, and assisting the principal with school-wide policy making, planning, and problem solving. The heads are officially allotted five hours for administrative work from their 30-hour bi-weekly resource centre time.

Within the Project, the differences in workload between major and minor department heads are apparent. In departments with only one teacher/head, responsibility for teaching, developing and maintaining curriculum, marking, keeping the centre open, and departmental administrative work all falls to one person. The adjustment made is that the resource centres for these departments are not open all the time. The rest of this section describes changes in the department head role as reported in our interviews.

6.1.2. Changes in the Department Head Role

Department heads reported an overall decentralization of administrative responsibilities to the departments, increased responsibility for curriculum, more paperwork, more contact with staff and students, and a greater need to lead by example. Project Excellence began the year after a new administrative team (principal and both vice-principals) took charge of E.S.C.H.S. The decentralization which occurred in the context of Project Excellence reflects the management approach of the new administration, as well as the influence of the Project.

Heads have increased responsibility for timetabling and departmental administration

> "In the traditional system, things were taken care of a lot by administration -- numbers, marks, timetabling. Now we do all that".
>
> "We didn't have to timetable people before,but now I have 10 to co-ordinate - the RCA and teachers, or I stay in the centre if someone is away".
>
> "The head covers a lot more, depending on how many people are in the department. For instance, if someone is sick or away, since I am the only full-time person and head, it is my responsibility to cover for them. Before it would be assigned from the Front Office".
>
> "I've found that there is a lot more responsibility put on the head for a lot of things -- the running of things that used to be taken up by other people, teachers or administration."

Heads have more responsibility for curriculum

> "You are more responsible for curriculum. When the teachers were in the classroom, they kept track of things. Now you have to see that units are completed, are good, and on the shelf. Also, since my teachers have changed, I'm responsible for seeing the courses are available. Courses are not as much the teacher's."
>
> "In the old system, the heads supervised classrooms and teachers, now they supervise units."
>
> "In the old system, the number of courses offered and supervised was a function of the number of teachers assigned to the department, e.g. four

> teachers equalled 24 courses. Now the number of courses offered is not limited by the number of teachers. As a result, the head has more courses to take care of -- monitoring, materials upkeep, overseeing revision."

Heads have closer contact with staff and students

> "In this system we are working more closely together. It is less autocratic. We meet everyday, talk a lot, are more flexible in this system."
>
> "In the older system, you often didn't know what was going on behind closed doors. In this system, you can see how things are going. It's more free flowing."

Heads are called on to model desirable behaviours and relationships for teachers and students

> "I think the department head in this system has much more responsibility for setting an example of the work to do, rapport with students, the climate to maintain in the centre. This is very different from before where every teacher was behind the classroom door in her own room".

Some department heads said they did not see a great deal of difference in their role except for the curriculum work and an increased "paper trail".

6.1.3. Concerns of Department Heads about Their Role

The E.S.C.H.S. administration and department heads have devoted considerable attention to concerns related to teacher advisor, teacher, and student role implementation in Project Excellence (chapter 4). Very little attention has been directed towards the specific concerns and needs of department heads in this system. From our interviews with department heads during the third year of implementation, we identified the following concerns specific to implementation of their role.

Adjusting to changes in staff due to loss of teachers and shifting course enrolments

> "I'm at the mercy of a lot of different factors. People kept getting shifted around according to things in the school. Some went to teach elsewhere after the first year. Dealing with all that is my responsibility."

How and when to keep centres open

> "There are no supply teachers in the system. We need one or two who do understand the system. Today I put in extra time in the centre because one of my teachers is out of the school and there is no one to supervise the centre."

> "A current issue is whether to keep centres open when no teachers are there."

Working with teachers on new curriculum and finding ways to incorporate alternative learning modes into existing units

> "What's in new guidelines...We'd like to get started on the units. With units, you have to write the references, list materials, look at what you have or rewrite according to the guidelines, then type it, then copy it."

> "The first year was just writing units. Then it became apparent that other means of communicating information were needed. One of the thrusts of last year was on audio-visual and computer materials. Now we have to index them into appropriate places in existing units."

Finding curriculum resource people to help teachers improve their units

> "There is a lack of curriculum resource people at the board level to consult in the development of courses and the interpretation of guidelines as they would if the school were in a larger population centre. I have to function as the expert and I'm not. We've also had difficulty finding relevant professional development offerings outside the school."

The number of meetings

> "There are so many meetings for different things in this school. Also teachers involved in extra-curricular activities make it hard to organize a meeting time."

Despite these concerns, department heads are generally pleased with the impact of Project Excellence on their departments.

> "It has offered advantages in that students are more responsible for their own learning. We are able to offer a larger number of courses, and we actually give those courses! It has allowed us to exchange resources from one department to another. We can intervene with a student whenever we see one in difficulty. It is more flexible. We work together as a department to solve problems."

6.1.4. Recommendations for the Department Head Role

In our view, department heads have been the main channel for implementing improvements in the Project, yet the department head role and responsibilities remain ill-defined. Department heads, both major and minor, experience time management problems related to their role, which have not been a focus of administrative discussion and problem solving. Resolution of "management concerns" related to their role will make it easier for them to direct their full attention to curriculum improvement and student learning issues within their departments.

(12) *Recommendation:* Expectations concerning the special role and responsibilities of department heads in Project Excellence are unclear. We recommend that the administration and heads, in consultation with the federation, plan for discussion and clarification of expectations for department heads in this system.

(13) *Recommendation:* The concerns of department heads about carrying out their role have not been openly aired and addressed. We recommend that the administration organize discussions with the heads in order to identify time management and other concerns about their role, and to seek solutions to those problems.

(14) *Recommendation:* The issue of keeping centres open when teachers are absent has been debated in terms of student movement and discipline. We believe this debate needs to take fuller account of the implications for department heads. Covering for other teachers inevitably takes away from time heads might otherwise spend on departmental matters, or on their own curriculum and teacher advisor time. Something needs to be done to relieve department heads of sole responsiblity for keeping centres open when teachers are absent.

6.2 THE ROLE OF PRINCIPALS AND VICE-PRINCIPALS

6.2.1. Project Leadership

École Secondaire Cochrane High School has a full-time principal and two half-time vice-principals (French, English) that form the administrative team for the school. Administrators were interviewed about their role in Project Excellence, and the nature of the changes in their role.

While each has some specific duties, the administrator's overall role can be summed up in these two statements:

> "The task of administration is to try to keep the picture of what we are trying to be foremost in our minds for the whole school, whereas department heads do it within the departments and try to ensure that the whole school is moving in that direction."
>
> "Our role is to observe what's going on, to analyze what's going on, and to try to ensure that it remains true to the direction we want to be going...And to bring about any changes that are needed if we're not headed in that direction."

The administrators describe a three-stage problem-solving process for Project implementation:

(1) the administrative team (principal and vice-principals) reflects on issues related to goals as they come up in day to day experience;

(2) the department heads and administration meet to discuss issues and solution strategies that are left to the departments to implement; and

(3) whole staff meetings are held to reinforce goals and strategies, communicate problems, discuss concerns, and build consensus for action.

Execution of this process has taken different forms over the three years of implementation (chapter 4), but continues as a part of the ongoing evolution of the program.

6.2.2. Duties of Administrators

The Principal and vice-principals perform the usual duties of secondary school administrators. The manner in which they carry out these duties, the problems they deal with, and the relative emphasis given to different areas of administrator responsibility, however, differ in many ways from the traditional school.

The emphasis of the principal's role is basically to ensure that the principles of the Project are followed; to communicate with the board, parents, and staff; to evaluate staff; to work with the heads on the budget; to project staff needs and allocate positions of teachers to the departments (the head assigns them); to hire teachers; to evaluate curriculum and monitor school outcomes and process; and to solve problems with the vice-principals and heads. The vice-principals have parallel responsibilities. As one vice-principal said: "There's a bit of overlap, but we all do the same job. But it's a good example of the school team at work." One vice-principal is responsible for the French-language section (students, staff, curriculum), the other for English. Administrators say that the overlap in their responsibilities is deliberate. It allows each to have the same understanding of how the Project is working, and to use that understanding to help refine outcomes.

According to the administrators, execution of many of their duties (e.g., record keeping, attendance, budget) has become routine at this point, so that much of the everyday activity is focussed on student supervision and on refinement of curriculum and teacher activities in terms of Project goals.

6.2.3. The Nature of Change for Administrators

The change for administration in Project Excellence has been multi-layered. Administrators see themselves more as facilitators than supervisors and disciplinarians. The Project itself has demanded that many administrative responsibilities be handled differently.

It was difficult to sort out the effects of the Project itself on the administrative role, from changes that would have occurred as a factor of differences in leadership "style" from the previous principal. The following quotes and summaries present some of the major changes for school administrators.

Getting Rid of Guesswork

> "The greatest change is the openness of the system -- all the problems are right in front of you. In the traditional system, I might have an inkling, but not know much at all of what's going on in the classroom. I wouldn't really know at all what's being taught in the classroom. I could check a course outline and hope the teacher was doing that. A lot of it was guesswork. Here we know pretty much everthing there is to be known, and if we don't, we can find it out in a matter of seconds. Getting rid of the guesswork makes the position scary -- so much is evident. You question, are we doing better, are we all right here. Sometimes you'd almost prefer to be able to walk down the corridors and see the closed doors and guess that it's OK."

Less Time on Administrivia

> "A lot of the routine stuff just doesn't exist anymore. As we progress in the system, that has diminished."
>
> "If we had remained in the traditional system, I don't think the (school) team would be as strong. Every question, including budget, would be more difficult, I think."

Secretaries now handle much of the routine paperwork. The budget is now pro-rated on the basis of student enrolment by department, whereas before the heads had to work out the allocation of school money among themselves. These changes are less a function of Project Excellence, than of the new principal's management style.

Hiring and Staffing

Staffing is another area of change. In the past, the principal would staff every department and course. Now the department heads are told the number of positions available to the department based on student enrolment projections. They collaborate with each other in deciding which teachers will be assigned to which courses and centres.

One phenomenon of the Project is that it is difficult to predict how many students will be enrolled in specific courses at the same time. This results in periods of overload for teachers and departments. The administration had to devise a way to deal with "departments in difficulty" in such situations. During the 1987-88 school year, this happened in Grade 9 and 10 general-level mathematics. Two teachers from other departments were moved for one hour a day to help with this group. It has become a part of the administrative function to monitor and co-ordinate ongoing staffing needs in a way that views the school as a whole rather than as isolated departments.

The Principal retains the primary responsibility for hiring new teachers. Supply teachers are no longer used. The use of supply teachers is hindered by their lack of familiarity with the system and by the supply-teacher budget being used to pay the resource centre assistants.

Teacher Evaluation

Evaluation of staff is also different. While the Project has been in an implementation phase, little formal evaluation has been conducted unless a teacher requested it for a recommendation. The Principal described two means of teacher supervision. Foremost, is informal monitoring of what teachers are doing with students in the centres as he walks around the school. Since there are no classrooms, teachers are much more visible to the administration in Project Excellence than before.

A new director of education was appointed the first year of Project Excellence. At his direction, the Principal and staff developed more formal mechanisms for staff evaluation. The practice of annual goal-setting at the school, administrator, and teacher levels was initiated during year two of the Project. That year the administration, teachers, and federation representatives also developed a "Teacher-Principal Discussion Format for Teacher Improvement". This format outlines six areas of responsibility for teachers in Project Excellence (teacher advisor, learning facilitator, curriculum developer, work within the school "team", participation in co-curricular activities, and contributions to growth of the school). Teachers are asked to provide evidence of completion of tasks related to these areas. The principal discusses the results with the teacher in order to identify areas of strength, needs, and strategies for improvement. The principal is expected to interview a third of the staff each year.

These formal teacher evaluation mechanisms differ from conventional evaluation systems only in their specific focus on role expectations unique to Project Excellence.

To a large extent, the formal evaluation procedures are superfluous, because the system is set up in such a way that teachers and teacher advisors are continually held accountable for the quality of their units and the progress of their students. Teacher improvement is rarely dealt with in generalities. It is almost always dealt with in the context of specific students and issues. This represents a major change and improvement over conventional teacher evaluation practices in Ontario schools.

Curriculum Evaluation

Project Excellence has made curriculum more accessible to the administration.

> "It's changed enormously. We know exactly what we are looking for. It's a much more open thing, and you can zero in on things quickly. If you get a complaint about a unit you can go and get it and say show me where it's not good. You couldn't do that in the traditional system."

Comments and concerns of parents, students, and teacher advisors can all function as a stimulus to curriculum evaluation on the part of the administration. This was especially true during the first two years of the Project, due to initial concerns about unit length, clarity, quality (chapter 4), and student progress.

Discipline

Discipline is one area that has changed greatly. One vice-principal stated:

> "One of the things that was very apparent in other systems is that you are dealing with discipline problems in isolation from other things. Before Project Excellence, we would open in the morning and there would be a line of kids with big or small transgressions. You didn't have an information base to build a profile and look at reasons and work with the kid on them. As soon as the Project started, we tried to deal with this -- we said that we would always go back to the TA because they will know more. Now with the TA/VP meetings we have a forum for more people sharing ideas about discipline and solving problems. You can get further. It's easy to kick them out. We try to do it differently. We try to improve their behaviour."

Part of discipline involves patrolling the halls and motivating students to get back to work. It also includes anticipating things that have potential to be disruptive, such as athletic activities, and dealing with behaviours that require automatic suspension -- smoking, fighting, etc. The focus of discipline, and the role of vice-principals in particular, has changed -- as one described:

> "I am a facilitator and linker. I am the middle man for the teacher, the student, and the parent. I spend my time going through the halls, teaching, talking to students about what came up in TA meetings, conducting the TA meetings

themselves. I try to facilitate or motivate getting down to business."

Monitoring Student Outcomes

Before Project Excellence, the Principal rarely looked at individual student outcomes. Rather, he reviewed class averages submitted twice a year through the departments. Vice-principals had no specific involvement in monitoring student outcomes. This has all changed. During the first two years of the Project, the Principal met periodically with each TA to review the unit completion progress of every student. This responsibility was shifted to the vice-principals in year three, with the establishment of the bi-weekly vice-principal/teacher advisor unit review meetings (see chapters 3 and 4). These meetings provide a vehicle, not only for monitoring student progress, but also for collaborative problem-solving in difficult cases. Administrators speak highly of the results of these meetings:

> "This is the first year of the TA team meetings but they have been very effective. Now we have become a real team with all the people around verifying the problem, giving suggestions and talking about different ways of motivating, collaborating on solutions. My job is to get interested people together to solve problems. This has proved a good way to do it. I know more about students now than before and can work to co-ordinate things so that their needs are addressed once a month."

The Principal still meets periodically with each TA. Now, however, he uses these meetings to check on specific issues. In Project Excellence, students who are not performing academically or behaviourally in accordance with Project expectations cannot slip by without becoming a focus of teacher and administrator attention. Any school adopting this system of education would be wise to consider this school's approach to monitoring student needs.

Staff Development

Before 1985, when Project Excellence came into place, teachers would go to conferences or other schools to discuss common issues. Speakers would come into the school to talk about classroom discipline or teaching strategies. Now, as there are few schools with which they have management or teaching issues in common, staff development is often organized internally, relying on their own resources. During the first couple of years, staff development days were used to work on implementation problems (chapter 4). Now, while they are still internally focussed, they are structured to allow departments to set some of their own agendas. The Principal sees a continuing need to allow staff time for curriculum development and just "to get caught up". Professional development days typically include a half-day for departmental use, and a half-day for presentations or discussion of more general concerns.

The Principal regards staff development as one of his major responsibilities, one related to maintaining the vision of the Project. In the past, the concern was often whether staff *enjoyed* the speaker or content of the day. Now the concern is more on whether staff members find the day *useful* to their work.

Teamwork

Many areas of administrative responsibility -- program monitoring, evaluation, staff development, issues identification and decision-making -- are built into the team approach to administration (section 6.2.1.). Ideally, the whole school works together. This teamwork between the administration, heads, and staff represents a major change from the previous administration. While this is less a feature of Project Excellence than of the management style of the new administration, it has certainly been a major factor facilitating implementation of the Project.

6.2.3. Concerns of School Administrators about Their Role

Neither the Principal nor the vice-principals voiced any particular concerns or recommendations for change specific to their own roles. Their concerns were all focussed on ongoing refinement of the Project and on resolution of issues arising from the introduction of new factors. An example of the latter was the creation of a new Indian Band in the Cochrane area, and the integration of about 30 Native students, many of whom had special needs, into the Project. We have no specific recommendations pertaining to the principal and vice-principal roles.

CHAPTER 7

STUDENT ROLE IN PROJECT EXCELLENCE

This chapter examines the student role in Project Excellence. Student behaviours during year three of the Project are evaluated in terms of ideal expected behaviours. The changes for students from before the Project are also described. Student perceptions of Project impact are reviewed in chapter 12. Student attitudes, concerns, and recommendations are reviewed in chapter 14.

7.1. DESIGN FOR EVALUATION OF STUDENT IMPLEMENTATION

Our evaluation of how well students are fulfilling their expected role in Project Excellence is based on a student survey, interviews with 39 students, and observation of students in the resource centres and TA groups.

The survey instrument included items related to student behaviours, student opinions, and background characteristics (e.g., year in school, sex, career goals). We identified expected student behaviours from school documents describing Project Excellence and initial interviews with administrators and teachers. Survey items to measure degree of implementation of the student role were derived from this list. The list and items were critiqued by E.S.C.H.S staff. A draft of the questionnaire was piloted with members of the student council. The final survey was administered to all non-adult students in March. A total of 293 questionnaires were returned, which represented about 85 per cent of the total non-adult student population enrolled at that time. A statistical profile of survey respondents appears in Appendix F.

The interviews asked students to describe the change from what they did in school before, to talk about their adjustment to the Project, its impact (chapters 11, 12), and their opinions (chapter 14). Interviewees were selected for variation in sex, grade, level of difficulty in majority of courses (advanced, general, basic), and language section (English, French, French Immersion). Appendix F includes a statistical profile of the student interview sample.

During our initial visits we conducted 30-minute to one-hour observations of students and teachers at work in all the resource centres, and several TA groups. In the spring, we picked eight students from our student interview sample (see section 7.3.4, this chapter) and accompanied them each for a half-day.

7.2. OVERVIEW OF THE STUDENT ROLE AND WORKDAY

The ideal role of the student in Project Excellence is an active one -- students take responsibility for their own learning. As described in the official project description:

> "Rather than being scheduled in a particular classroom, at a particular time, with a specific group of students and a specified teacher, the student's time is his own. With the assistance of his Teacher Advisor the student pursues studies at his own rate of speed, commensurate with his ability. The make up of each school day is determined by the student. If a student desires to pursue one subject for an extended period of time during a day he is not prevented from doing so. Because a student is proceeding at his own rate, the motivation to succeed comes from him and the external manifestation of this motivation is the completed tests which are monitored by his Teacher-Advisor. Because the student's time is his own, the student becomes greatly responsible for his own progress." (E.S.C.H.S.: Project Excellence - A Description, 1986)

Specific behavioural expectations for students in Project Excellence are described in chapter 3 (section 3.1.6.). One student summarized the student role thus, "Organization is the key to survival and success...With that the workload will be manageable and there will be time to do other things."

The student's day typically starts with the morning TA group meeting. Students then go to centres to work on their units or to write tests. There is a common break at 10:30 a.m., where students mill around and talk to each other in the halls. After that they return to work in the centres until lunch hour at noon. From 1:00 to 2:00 in the afternoon, they again return to work, perhaps on a different subject. There is another ten-minute break at 2:00 p.m., and school ends with an attendance check at 3:05 p.m. As the week unfolds, students adjust their timetable to include seminars, tests, work in the audio-visual lab, TA interviews, and extra-curricular activities.

7.3. STUDENT ROLE FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

7.3.1. School-wide Findings

This analysis examines survey responses and observations related to key behavioural expectations for students. It asks how students are implementing their role in Project Excellence. A complete frequency distribution for the Student Role and Opinions Questionnaire appears in Appendix G. For this analysis, relevant survey items are clustered under the following areas of student behaviour: contact with teacher advisors, contact with subject teachers, timetabling, short-term planning, work habits (location, use of school time, peer contact, testing), and productivity.

Contact with Teacher Advisors

ITEM	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
25. I have a personal interview with my TA at least every 2 weeks.	23%	19%	20%	24%	15%
31. I talk with my TA about any problems I'm having keeping up with my school work.	6%	22%	34%	29%	10%
19. I talk to my TA about personal problems that interfere with my work.	6%	6%	16%	29%	43%
26. I let my TA plan my school work for me.	4%	8%	21%	30%	35%

Student responses to items #25 and #31 confirm the teacher advisor role finding that a substantial number of TAs are not keeping up with regularly scheduled bi-weekly interviews with their TA students. The proportion of students (39%) reporting "seldom" or "never" is not in line with Project expectations. In light of concerns about student productivity reported below, and the credit accumulation rate findings reported in Chapter 10, we believe this gap in TA-student communication deserves immediate attention. Item #19 suggests that students do not often bring their personal problems into their discussions with TAs. Item #26 is a positive finding. It shows that a large majority of students are, in fact, taking responsibility for organizing their own schoolwork.

Contact with Subject Teachers

ITEM	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
23. I go to a subject teacher for help whenever I have problems with a unit.	28%	38%	24%	7%	3%
14. I go to my TA for help with units.	2%	12%	29%	36%	22%
9. I have to look for teachers when I need help.	20%	31%	37%	10%	3%
32. I get frustrated waiting for help from teachers.	23%	31%	30%	11%	4%
33. When I have questions, I can get teachers to give me the answers.	4%	20%	40%	29%	7%
21. I attend optional seminars.	9%	27%	31%	21%	17%

Student responses to item #23 indicate that students do seek help from subject teachers as the need arises. The data also confirm that some students seek academic assistance from their TAs. Student responses to items #9 and #32 reflect frequent complaints from students about availability and access to teachers in Project Excellence. In our view, the significance of these findings must be viewed in relation to the finding reported later in this section that few students routinely study in the centre for the courses they are working on. If students do not study where the teachers are, then teachers cannot be faulted for the fact that students have to go looking for them. The problem of "wait time" is another question. Our observations did confirm that students often have to wait for teachers while the latter work with other students in the academic centres. Without increasing the number of teachers, hiring teacher aides, or setting up a student-student tutoring system, we do not see a ready solution to this problem.

Students in Project Excellence are supposed to "learn by doing", which means that teachers should help them find answers to their questions rather than simply giving them the answers. Our observations and student responses to item #33 indicate that this goal is being achieved moderately well. A general observation would be that the more pressed for time the teacher feels (due to students waiting or limited small group learning time), the more likely he or she is to resort to answer giving.

The survey data indicate that a sizeable proportion of students (38%) "seldom" or "never" attend optional seminars. As reported under "timetabling" below, this is not a result of timetabling conflicts. We hesitate to suggest that more mandatory seminars are needed, since seminar functions and content are so variable. Low attendance at seminars, however, is a concern. It may contribute to the perception of some students and parents that teachers in Project Excellence do not teach, and that students do not get enough chances for peer interaction in a learning context. The survey responses suggest that many students are not taking advantage of existing opportunities to see teachers in more conventional teaching situations and to learn in small groups.

Most teachers see value in seminars for enhancing student learning, and for helping students pace themselves through a course. Increased seminar attendance might help increase the rate of student course completion. Teachers have experimented with many different kinds of seminar "incentives" with varying degrees of success. One incentive which has not been widely used, but could be, would be for teachers to elicit and disseminate testimonials from students who have benefited from seminars in their courses.

Timetabling

ITEM	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
6. I am able to take available courses in the language and level I want.	56%	28%	11%	2%	2%
34. I have problems timetabling the courses I want.	1%	12%	30%	39%	17%
15. I have to choose between seminars and centres that are open only during certain hours.	6%	18%	30%	27%	15%
12. I do my easy courses first and leave the hard ones for later.	8%	22%	41%	24%	5%
18. When I finish a course during the school year, I start working on another right away.	51%	28%	16%	3%	2%

One of the major goals of Project Excellence was to eliminate timetabling conflicts that would prevent students from taking the courses they need at any time. The survey findings indicate that this goal is being achieved (see also Chapter 10, section 10.1 "Course Maintenance"). Our findings provide some evidence of scheduling conflicts for students between seminars and centres.

Of greater concern is the substantial percentage (30%) of students who "always" or "often" leave their hard courses for later in the year. This pattern is inconsistent with expectations for students to balance their "hard" and "easy" courses over the year. The administration may wish to consider more stringent guidelines for TAs concerning student timetabling plans for the school year.

As they finish each course, a majority of students (79%) do begin a new one. This is in accordance with the project design. Because some students do procrastinate on their harder courses, however, starting new courses as they complete the easier ones may hinder completion of difficult courses and slow the rate of credit accumulation. This issue is considered in-depth in chapter 11.

Short-Term Planning

ITEM	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
1. I make written goals and plans for my school work on a daily or weekly basis.	16%	20%	33%	19%	12%
17. I decide what I'm going to work on each day before I get to school.	19%	32%	23%	17%	9%

10. I keep my own records of how much I've done.	52%	20%	10%	13%	6%

These data indicate that only about 50% of the students in Project Excellence routinely plan their workday before coming to school, and that even fewer develop written goals and plans. On the other hand, most students do seem to monitor their own progress closely. In light of concerns about productivity and credit completion reported later, we believe steps should be taken to increase the efficiency of student time use through consistent daily planning. Some TAs, for example, do not allow their students to leave after the morning attendance check until they have declared their "plan" for the day. This practice might well be built into the morning routine for all TAs, perhaps with a simple planning form. Students should retain the flexibility of altering their plans as the day unfolds.

Work Habits

ITEM	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
13. When I do a unit, I work in the centre for that subject.	1%	9%	31%	46%	13%
35. I go to a centre and get to work right after the morning attendance.	16%	34%	28%	17%	6%
5. I do school work at home.	17%	27%	30%	17%	10%

Student responses to item #13 indicate that *a large majority of students (90%) do not routinely study in the centres for the courses they are working on.* Our student interviews and observations tend to confirm the tendency for many students to "camp out" in favoured study locations, moving back and forth to the other centres as needed for units and materials, or to consult teachers. This flexibility is built into the Project design to help prevent possible overcrowding in some centres, and because some centres are not open all day. The practice of working in other centres may be a major factor contributing to student complaints about access to teachers reported earlier.

We believe there is an overall need to increase student time-on-task in Project Excellence. This could be accomplished in part by creating more incentives or regulations to increase the proportion of students studying in centres corresponding to the courses they are working on, thereby reducing student movement in the halls and improving student access to teachers.

Responses to item #35 indicate that half the student body (50%) do not routinely go to a centre and get to work right after the morning attendance check. This finding again suggests a need for measures to improve the overall efficiency of student time use in Project Excellence, in order to increase student productivity. The suggestion of requiring daily oral or written workplans at the morning attendance check might help. Consideration might also be given to restricting student movement in the corridors for a set period during the first hour of the morning, and to invoking a "quiet hour" to start the day in centres where students have no special need to interact to get their units done.

During the year of our study, there was talk among staff about the possibility of establishing a homework policy. While the findings to item #5 do indicate that a majority of students do not consistently do unit work at home, we believe measures to improve student time use at school would do more to improving student productivity than a homework policy at this point.

ITEM	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
27. I spend most of my time at school doing schoolwork.	17%	46%	25%	8%	2%
7. I spend a lot of school time each day taking it easy and talking with friends.	5%	19%	42%	31%	3%
29. I work alone.	9%	18%	33%	25%	14%
30. I do units with my friends.	8%	24%	41%	20%	8%

Project Excellence places considerable responsibility on students to make effective use of their time at school for schoolwork. Responses to survey items #27 and #7 indicate that *a substantial minority (30% or more) of students do not consistently devote their time at school to schoolwork.* Our observations in the resource centres confirm that while many students are diligent workers, there is considerable "off-task" behaviour and time in the centres for some students (mostly talking with friends about things other than unit work). In our view, additional measures are needed to encourage more efficient time use among all students in the centres.

Project goals suggest that students should be able to work alone, not dependent on friends, and study alone except when help is needed. Responses to survey items #29 and #30 indicate that 30 per cent to 40 per cent of students in Project Excellence typically work with friends.

Among the students interviewed, some studied alone, some with friends, some a little of both.

We do not believe students should be denied the opportunity to learn together in spontaneous pairs or small groups. Project ideals may overemphasize individualized learning. Consistent with the preceding finding on time-on-task, however, we do believe that closer supervision of what students are doing when they are doing things together is warranted. We also suggest that the staff seek information and in-service assistance on constructive ways of helping students learn to work together, through such strategies as co-operative learning and buddy systems.

ITEM	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
8. I try to take a test before doing the unit.	0%	1%	7%	21%	70%
2. I take a test as soon as I finish the unit work. I don't wait to do it later.	25%	42%	25%	7%	1%
11. I prepare and study for tests before taking them.	49%	29%	16%	5%	1%

These findings indicate that students are generally conforming to Project expectations regarding the timing and preparation for unit tests. There is little evidence to support rumours of students trying to do tests without the prerequisite unit work.

Student Pacing and Productivity

ITEM	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
4. I work on at least 3 or 4 different courses each day.	2%	6%	18%	40%	34%
22. Once I start a unit I don't work on anything else until I'm finished.	15%	30%	34%	17%	3%
20. I complete my units in 4 to 6 hours or less.	14%	29%	38%	16%	4%
3. I set a pace for myself and keep it.	7%	28%	43%	18%	5%
28. I have trouble reaching my unit goals.	7%	25%	36%	25%	7%

Although students in Project Excellence are free to spend extended periods of time working on a single unit or course, they are strongly encouraged to plan about four blocks of time per day for different courses. Unit work should be broken into increments, if necessary, to maintain a balanced timetable and progress. Survey items #4 and #22 indicate that *a large majority of students (92%) do not routinely work on three or four courses per day*.

Students organize their daily work differently, as illustrated below.

> "I really don't have a schedule now. I just work on whatever I want to."
>
> "I really don't have to organize myself that much 'cause I just concentrate on one subject or two similar ones."
>
> "I work on one subject half a day, another the other half a day."
>
> "If I start with one subject I go until I finish it. I don't work on anything else."
>
> "I usually work with two or three subjects a day. I try to finish lots of units in a subject during one period of time."

The interview data tend to confirm that most students are not conforming to Project expectations for students to block out time each day to work on three or four subjects.

Lack of compliance with this expectation on the part of students, and lack of teacher advisor follow through on ensuring that compliance, appears to be a major factor contributing to continuing concerns about the rate of credit accumulation discussed in Chapter 12. Administrative and TA attention to this aspect of student work habits is needed. The previous suggestion to require or monitor the student's daily plans could facilitate improvement in this area.

Survey responses to item #20 above indicate that problems with unit length are not as acute as during the first two years of the Project. There remains a residual group of students who are consistently unable to complete their units in four to six hours. Given the amount of curriculum revision that has gone on (see Chapter 4), we believe student difficulties at this stage are more a function of their organization and study habits than of unit length per se.

The findings reported above also indicate that only about a third of the students responding to the survey are consistently able to set a pace and reach their unit goals (items #3 and #28). Since unit length is no longer the major source of difficulty, the problem appears to centre on the other issues raised in this discussion of student study habits, i.e., choice of place to study, time-on-task, daily timetabling, off task interaction with other students, and general study skills. The recommendations suggested here and in related sections of this report should contribute to an overall increase in student productivity and learning.

Contact with Parents and Extra-curricular Activities

ITEM	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
24. I talk about my schoolwork with my parents or guardians.	24%	25%	23%	19%	10%
16. I take part in school activities (sports, clubs, etc.)	22%	12%	17%	25%	24%

According to the student survey, about 30 per cent of parents do not frequently discuss schoolwork with their son or daughter. Recommendations for improving teacher and parent communications in other sections of this report should help increase the level of parent involvement for these students.

Responses to item #16 indicate that half the student body (49%) "seldom" or "never" takes part in the schools extra-curriclar programs and activities. As indicated in Chapter 4, we believe the school does provide a satisfactory range of extra-curricular programs and activities. Since those experiences are regarded as an integral part of the school's curriculum (OSIS, section 5.17), we believe the administration should investigate who is and who is not taking part in school activities (see this chapter, section, 7.3.3.), and how increased participation could be facilitated.

7.3.2. Profile of the Typical Student

These findings yield a picture of "the typical student" in Project Excellence during implementation year three as follows. Typical students may or may not have bi-weekly interviews with their TA. Sometimes they talk to their TA about schoolwork, but seldom about personal problems. Students organize their own work. They go to teachers and to TAs for help with units, but often have to look for teachers and get frustrated waiting for help. Typical students do not routinely attend optional seminars. They have few problems timetabling courses, but may procrastinate working on "hard courses". As soon as they finish one course, they usually enrol in another. The students may or may not make written daily/weekly plans and decide what to do before getting to school each day. They do keep their own progress records. Typical students do not normally study in centres for the subjects they are working on, and may or may not get to work right after morning attendance check. They generally spend most of the day doing schoolwork, but sometimes prefer to take it easy and talk with friends. Sometimes they do schoolwork at home. Typical students work with friends as opposed to working alone. They study for tests and take tests as soon as they finish a unit. They work on fewer than three or four courses a day, and concentrate on completing one unit before moving on to another. The students are usually able to complete units in four to six hours, but they are likely to have difficulty setting and keeping a pace and reaching their unit goals. They normally talk with their parents about their schoolwork, and may or may not participate in school activities.

The preceding profile of "the typical student" provides a backdrop for the ensuing analysis of the implementation behaviours of different subgroups of students.

7.3.3. Analysis of Student Role Implementation by Subgroup

The findings reported above pertain to the student body as a whole. In order to look for other patterns in the survey data, we did statistical comparisons of the responses of different groups of students, including: students in advanced, general, and basic level English or français courses; university/college-bound students and other students; and students in Grades 9, 10, and 11; males and females; and English-versus French-language program students. We also compared the implementation behaviours of students agreeing and disagreeing with the statement "this system works for me", and of those preferring Project Excellence or a traditional school (survey items #50, #56).

The Chi-square test was used to analyze inter-group differences in the distribution of responses to the student behaviour items. We isolated items showing statistically significant inter-group differences at the 10 per cent level (i.e., differences likely to occur by chance only 10 times out of 100).

Distinctive profiles emerged from this analysis for some subgroups of students. The descriptions in tables 7-1 and 7-2 summarize the "unique behaviours" of those groups of students, i.e., those behaviours which were significantly different in a statistical sense from those recorded for students in the school as a whole. What appears is that there are certain categories of students whose behaviours conform more closely to Project expectations.

Table 7-1 reveals that students who "agree" with the statement, "This system works for me", report implementation behaviours which are more consistent with Project Excellence expectations than in the case of the typical student. This is particularly evident for planning, assistance seeking, use of time, approach to testing, pace and productivity. These findings validate the image of the ideal student in the Project.

Table 7-2 summarizes and compares the significantly different behaviours of university/college-bound students with those of other students. University/college-bound students report implementation behaviours which are consistently more in line with Project ideals than students not planning on postsecondary school education. One surprising finding is that students not planning to attend university/college are less likely to report regular bi-weekly interviews with their TAs. This finding warrants further investigation, because it implies that some TAs may be selective within their own TA groups in the regularity of student interviews.

We also looked at the behaviours of students in advanced, general, and basic level English or français courses. The students in advanced courses (49%, N=144) report behaviours more in line with Project ideals. The pattern of responses is similar to that described above for university/college-bound students. Students in general English/français courses (39%, N=115) do not have any unique behaviours, i.e., they conform to the previously described picture of the "typical" student. Students in basic English/français courses (10%, N=28) report behaviours that are consistently out-of-line with Project ideals. The number of significant differences is likely exaggerated due to the small sample size, however the overall gestalt is compellingly consistent. As a group, students in basic courses were **less likely** than the typical student to go to teachers for help and get frustrated waiting for help, to attend optional seminars, to complete one course and immediately begin another, to decide what to work on before coming to school, to keep progress records, to do schoolwork at home, to study for tests, to talk to parents about schoolwork, and to take part in school activities (see preceding discussion of participation in extra-curricular activities). These students were **more likely** than the typical student to have to look for teachers, to do easy courses first, and to spend school time talking with friends.

Table 7-1

Unique Behaviours of Students who Agree/Disagree that "This system works for me"

AGREE "THIS SYSTEM WORKS FOR ME" (62% N=183)

STUDENTS WHO AGREE THAT "THE SYSTEM WORKS FOR ME" ARE MORE LIKELY THAN THE TYPICAL STUDENT TO...

- Go to teachers for help
- Decide what to work on before each school day
- Get right to work after morning attendance
- Do schoolwork at home
- Spend school time doing schoolwork
- Work alone
- Take tests as soon as units are done
- Study for tests
- Not work on anything else once they start a unit
- Complete units in 4 to 6 hours

DISAGREE "THIS SYSTEM WORKS FOR ME" (39% N=102)

STUDENTS WHO DISAGREE THAT "THE SYSTEM WORKS FOR ME" ARE MORE LIKELY THAN THE TYPICAL STUDENT TO...

- Have problems timetabling their courses
- Do easy courses first
- Spend school time talking with friends
- Not work alone
- Have trouble reaching unit goals
- Set a pace and keep it consistent

Table 7-2

Unique Behaviours of University/College-Bound Students and Other Students

UNIVERSITY/COLLEGE-BOUND (66% N=194)

UNIVERSITY/COLLEGE-BOUND STUDENTS ARE MORE LIKELY THAN THE TYPICAL STUDENT TO...

- Have bi-weekly TA interviews
- Go to teachers for help
- Get frustrated waiting for help
- Make written plans for schoolwork
- Keep progress records
- Do schoolwork at home
- Spend school time doing schoolwork
- Work alone
- Take tests as soon as units are done
- Study for tests
- Set a pace and keep it
- Talk to parents about schoolwork
- Take part in school activities

NON-UNIVERSITY/COLLEGE-BOUND (31% N=92)

NON-UNIVERSITY/COLLEGE-BOUND STUDENTS ARE LESS LIKELY THAN THE TYPICAL STUDENT TO...

- Have bi-weekly TA interviews
- Talk with TA about schoolwork problems
- Attend optional seminars
- Work in subject-related centres

NON-UNIVERSITY/COLLEGE-BOUND STUDENTS ARE MORE LIKELY THAN THE TYPICAL STUDENT TO...

- Do easy courses first
- Spend school time talking with friends

Despite their lack of conformity with Project ideals, students in basic courses are quite satisfied with Project Excellence. Seventy-one per cent of those students said they preferred to stay in Project Excellence, as opposed to going to a traditional school. Students in advanced and general courses both split 50/50 on that question.

Students responding to the survey were asked their current preference of schools, Project Excellence or a traditional school. Of the 293 respondents, 50 per cent chose Project Excellence and 46 per cent chose a traditional school. Student attitudes towards the Project are considered in greater depth in Chapter 14. For this analysis we looked at the behaviours of students in each choice category.

The implementation behaviours of students choosing Project Excellence did not differ significantly from the "typical student" profile. This implies that those choosing Project Excellence are not necessarily limited to those who say the system works well.

The implementation behaviours of students choosing a traditional school do differ from the typical student. As a group, these students were *more likely* than the typical student to have to look for teachers, to get frustrated waiting for teachers, to report problems timetabling their courses, to delay getting to work after morning attendance, to spend school time taking it easy and talking with friends, to have trouble completing units in four to six hours, to have trouble reaching unit goals, and to take part in school activities. In sum, students who prefer a traditional school report more off-task behaviour, productivity problems, and frustration.

The analysis of subgroup implementation behaviours leads to the following conclusion. Students who are able and willing to conform to the behavioural expectations for students in Project Excellence are more likely to think the system is working well. Students who are unable or unwilling to conform to the behavioural expectations for students in Project Excellence are less likely to think the system is working well, and more likely to prefer a traditional school.

A key issue for the short- and long-term effectiveness of Project Excellence is how to help students who are not conforming to expected behaviours become better implementers of the student role. Many of the recommendations already presented in our analysis of the teacher, teacher advisor, and student roles support this goal. In addition to these recommendations, we believe the administration and staff at E.S.C.H.S. could experiment with more ways for students to teach each other how to succeed in an independent learning system like Project Excellence. Some teacher advisors encourage experienced students to help younger students in their TA groups. We think a more systematic and broader-scale approach to students helping each other deserves consideration (see recommendations below for specific suggestions).

7.3.4. Observations of Students

A small group of students (N=8) were observed for a half-day each in order to see what life is actually like for students. As these observations were a somewhat artificial situation, what we found cannot be said to be true of all students, all the time. The observations did support survey and interview findings. This description presents a composite picture of our observations.

Overall, the observations reinforced the schedule of activities described in the student's day and in teacher comments. Students came to attendance with their TA in the morning. The TA asked several students about their plans for the day. Students then went to the centre of their choice and got to work. A teacher often came around and looked over their shoulder to see what they were doing. Sometimes students asked questions. In some centres, students stood in line waiting to talk to a teacher. RCAs in centres handed out materials, kept up with records, and occasionally quieted students who were making noise in centres. Students took breaks on schedule and then got back to work. During breaks, students usually went out into the halls and talked to other students. Students often would go to one centre to get a unit, and then go to another to work.

Student comments about interruptions, noise, and the movement in and out of the centres by other students were strongly reinforced by observations. In one centre, for example, the number of students present changed from 18 to 15 to 13 to 10 to 15 in five minute intervals. Students at large desks talked to other students, sometimes to the obvious detriment of students who were trying to work. Teachers would come around and try to quiet down talkers, or ask them to leave the centre.

There was also constructive conversation. Students asked or were asked by other students for help. Sometimes they compared results. Often they worked together on units.

Students had favourite places to work. The places chosen by students were not necessarily related to the subject they were working on, except where technical resources were essential, such as in family studies, art, commercial. Student choice of place was also influenced by the relationship with teachers in the centre. Some worked in the centre their

TA was in, as they felt they knew the TA better than other subject teachers.

Students did occasionally seek help from teachers. None of those observed had to search for teachers for help, though some had to wait for help while teachers finished with other students. In a few centres, students stood in line to talk to the teacher. In the mathematics centre, this line was a long one. In others, students sat at their desks and waited for an opening. Unit progress came to a halt while awaiting their turn.

7.4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE STUDENT ROLE

The following recommendations are intended to improve implementation of the student role and student success in Project Excellence. The previous recommendation for the administration to ensure that teacher advisors are following through with individual TA student interviews on at least a bi-weekly basis with *all* their students is supported by the student survey findings.

(15) *Recommendation:* In light of student concerns about teacher availability, and the study-time loss incurred moving from centre to centre, we recommend that the administration and staff investigate ways of encouraging or requiring students to do their unit work in the corresponding subject centres as much as possible.

(16) *Recommendation:* Many students do not attend optional seminars. They are missing opportunities for contact with teachers in a more conventional learning situation, for interaction with other students, and for built-in incentives to complete the seminar courses. We recommend that teachers consider ways to get students to publicize the usefulness of seminars to their peers.

(17) *Recommendation:* Many students do not plan their work before coming to school, do not get to work right after the morning attendance check, and are not blocking time for work on several subjects a day. We recommend that the administration and staff develop a policy and procedure whereby students present a plan for the day to their teacher advisor before leaving the morning attendance check.

(18) *Recommendation:* Many students do not consistently get to work after the morning attendance check, but those that do are more successful in the system. We recommend that the administration consider restricting student movement in the halls during the first hour of the day. We further recommend that consideration be given to implementing a "quiet hour" to start the day in centres where students do not routinely need to work together.

(19) *Recommendation:* There is too much "off-task" behaviour in the resource centres for some students. The amount of off-task behaviour varies for different centres. Additional measures are needed to encourage more efficient time use among all students in all centres.

(20) *Recommendation:* A majority of students prefer to study in pairs or small groups, rather than alone. While students who work alone tend to be more successful in the Project, we do not believe students should be forced to work alone. We do recommend closer supervision by teachers in the centres of what students are doing when they are "working" together. We also recommend that the administration seek information and in-service assistance on ways of helping students learn to learn together, through such strategies as co-operative learning, peer tutors, and buddy systems.

(21) *Recommendation:* Half the student body does not take an active part in the school's extra-curricular programs. We recommend that the administration investigate who these students are and their reasons for non-participation, and consider ways of facilitating increased participation in these programs and activities.

(22) *Recommendation:* There are many students in Project Excellence who do believe "the system works for me". We believe these students' experiences and practical wisdom could be more effectively tapped as a resource for teaching other students how to learn and succeed in an independent learning system. Specific suggestions for consideration include student mentors or coaches for students entering the system (the mentor/coaches would all be recognized as "successful students"), and video-taped interviews with successful students and students who have "turned around" after a period of non-success. Such interviews might focus on both the behavioural and attitudinal dimensions of learning to succeed in Project Excellence. Some could be used in the orientation for all students. Others could be used to assist and motivate students having trouble adjusting and making progress in the system.

7.5. CHANGES IN THE STUDENT ROLE

7.5.1. Comparison to Student Role in Traditional School

The following captions and excerpts from student interviews summarize the changes in the student role most commonly mentioned.

Students work at their own pace

> "I can work at my own speed. It rushed me before. The teacher would ask you something and you can't think of the answers."

Students work on their own

> "You're working on your own. There is no one to disturb you. ... There are teachers. They don't tell you what to do. Everything is on paper. But it puts

a lot of pressure on you from parents and TAs."
"Now we work individually. This is new."

Students work on what they want, where they want, when they want

"We had to sit in class all the time. You didn't get to work on what you wanted. You had to do what the teacher says."

"There's no classroom. We are allowed to work with who we want, anywhere we want. It's the opposite of the traditional system."

"C'est différent. On travaille indépendamment. Il n'y a pas d'enseignant qui te...C'est totalement indépendant. C'est meilleur. Si tu ne veux pas travailler, tu n'as pas besoin."

Learning is student-, rather than teacher-directed

"I work on my own. I did not work on my own before. You had to do what the teacher told you, and here you just do what you want."

"There's no teacher in front to teach. You can do what you want. You are allowed to work alone."

Learning depends on reading and doing units, rather than on listening in class

"In the old system the teacher says it in class. Then you read about it at home. The reading reinforces what the teacher said. In this system you need a strong background in reading. It's pretty hard."

Students have to go to teachers for help

"You don't have a teacher looking over you all the time. In grade school there's always a teacher if you have a question. Here you have to go look and find them. It's hard, but it's OK."

"Students are working on their own. I like it, because it's less difficult for me this way. If students have problems, they go see their teachers for explanations."

Students are under more pressure to keep up

"Tu es par toi-même. Si tu décides que tu es malade un matin, tu te punis toi-même. Tu as tant de modules à faire par mois, par année. Si tu manques une journée d'école, j'ai toujours l'impression de tomber en arrière...Il y a beaucoup plus de pression maintenant."

"When you go to a normal system you have so many classes a day. You combine everything and learn more. Here you do one or two subjects a day. You tend to focus on subjects you like and leave behind the ones that are hard. I'm getting caught behind. In another system I'd be keeping up."

The comments above capture the essence of the change for students from large-group, teacher-directed instruction to individualized, student-directed learning with teachers as a resource. They also convey the mixed blessings of freedom, responsibility, and pressure that are part of the change. In describing their sense of control over the learning process, students seemed genuinely unconscious of teacher influence in the units themselves.

7.5.2. Student Adjustment to Project Excellence

In the interviews, we asked students what difficulties they had initially adjusting to Project Excellence. A few reported no problems adjusting. The following quotes illustrate different aspects of the change process as experienced by students.

Students experienced temporary confusion while learning the system

> "When I first started I was confused. I didn't know how the system worked, where to bring my units when finished. I got lost. I guess I just kinda got used to it after awhile."

Students found it hard to take responsibility for their own learning

> "La première année, ça a été très dur. Ça prend de la motivation. Il faut apprendre à prendre ses responsabilités, à travailler tout seul, parce que la plupart du temps, on ne peut pas trouver les professeurs, ou quand on les trouve, ils sont occupés et nous disent de revenir plus tard."

> "Working without a teacher pushing you. For me this system shows you that it's not going to be taught to you, that you have to look to yourself first."

Some students had difficulty settling down to work at first

> "I would just sit down and try to get myself to work. I always used to go for a walk. I wasted a lot of time. I didn't do anything. Finally, my parents and TA had a talk. I came to realize that I have to settle down if I want to do anything in life. Now I don't work with friends. The TA encourages you. All the teachers encourage you. Also, if I don't do my work my parents won't let me go out. Now I'm used to it. I do my work."

> "Il n'y avait plus d'horaire. Il n'y avait pas de limite. Les amis étaient autour. On sortait le soir. On ne faisait pas de devoirs. La première année, je n'ai pas fait grand-chose. La deuxième année, je me suis plus discipliné. Je faisais des devoirs le soir."

Some students had difficulty learning to organize their time

> "My difficulties were just setting my priorities...doing my work and homework. You have to learn to sit down, stare at your paper, concentrate, and organize your time, like have a goal to do so many units a week."

Some students were frustrated by the lack of readiness of the project the first year

> "When I first began I had a lot of trouble because nothing was ready. This was really hard on everybody. The units were not really prepared, and the teachers did not know what they were doing either. I did not get much done the first year. The next year I did really well.

> "La première année il manquait des modules. Il fallait changer de matière. Au début, certains professeurs ne savaient pas quoi faire. Ils disaient de commencer plusieurs cours en même temps. Il fallait passer d'un cours à l'autre. Cela a été difficile pour moi de reprendre des cours sur lesquels je n'avais pas travaillé pendant quelques temps."

> "Parce que c'était la première année, les modules étaient vraiment longs et durs pour les étudiants de 9e année...ça prenait un peu de temps à s'adapter. Je n'ai pas eu le temps de finir mes cours la première année."

Students entering Project Excellence the second and third years have had an easier time adjusting

> "The new students now get used to the system much faster than we did. We wasted a lot of time at the beginning of Project Excellence. The units were not quite ready. It was difficult."

The preceding quotes highlight key features and differences in the adjustment process for students. There appear to be three major "passages" for students: (1) learning how the system works; (2) accepting responsibility for one's own learning; and (3) learning to use one's time wisely. Everyone gets through the first after a period of temporary confusion while learning the ropes. The second two passages are more difficult. Not all students have the necessary maturity and organizational skills when they first come into the system. Some have to go through a period of maturation before they come to accept the responsibility to perform in Project Excellence. Some need more help than others learning how to settle down and organize their work. The challenge for schools adopting this system of education is to help students through this period of adjustment without falling too far behind in credit accumulation.

Findings from the student interviews, the survey, and student outcomes (chapter 14) all suggest that students currently entering Project Excellence have an easier time adjusting to it than those who participated in the first year of implementation. This testifies to the effectiveness of the current Grade 8 orientation program (chapter 3), and to the experience gained by teachers and TAs. On the other hand, it also stands as a criticism of the haste with which the Project was initiated at E.S.C.H.S. Students that year suffered unnecessary frustration, and their progress was retarded, due to the lack of readiness of the curriculum.

We asked the students interviewed whether they were still experiencing problems of adjustment to the Project. The majority reported no significant problems except for access to and availability of help from subject teachers, especially in core subjects like mathematics. Recommendations relative to this concern appear earlier in this chapter. Most of those interviewed said they were quite satisfied with the support and encouragement provided by their TA.

CHAPTER 8

PARENT ROLE IN PROJECT EXCELLENCE

There are definite expectations and opportunities for parent participation in Project Excellence. This chapter evaluates parent participation in Project Excellence in terms of Project ideals for parental involvement. Findings are also presented concerning the nature of the change for parents from before. The chapter concludes with recommendations for the parent role. Parent opinions about Project outcomes and the Project in general are reviewed in chapters 12 and 14.

8.1 DESIGN FOR EVALUATION OF PARENT ROLE IMPLEMENTATION

Expectations for parent involvement in Project Excellence were identified in written materials describing the Project and in background interviews with administrators and teachers. In order to find out how well parents are meeting these expectations, parents were surveyed by mail and a subset interviewed.

The Parent Role and Opinions Questionnaire was piloted with the Project Excellence Parent Advisory Committee, and mailed to parents of every non-adult student in the school. Completed surveys were returned from parents of 184 students. This sample represented about 60 per cent of the parent population. Survey respondents are likely to be more involved in their son's or daughter's education than parents who did not respond.

The respondents were evenly distributed by student's grade level and sex. A majority were parents of students in advanced English or français, followed by parents of students in general courses. Few parents of students in basic courses responded. Parents of university- and college-bound students outweighed parents of those with other plans. One-fourth of the respondents declared themselves francophone, the others being anglophone. Appendix H presents a statistical profile of the survey respondents.

Personal interviews were conducted with parents of 15 students. The sample provided for variation in sex, grade, academic level, and language section (French, English, French Immersion) of the student; in parent satisfaction with the Project; and in family characteristics (number children in Project Excellence, number of parents at home, occupation).

8.2. DESCRIPTION OF IDEAL PARENT ROLE

Students, their parents, and their teacher advisor are supposed to form a team that successfully guides the student through secondary school. Parents are expected to work with the TA and the student to select and timetable courses. They should maintain contact with the student's TA through regular phone calls and written reports. TAs may talk with parents about a student's progress, achievements, academic problems, and other situations inside or outside the school affecting their performance. Parents and TAs of Grade 9/10 students are expected to communicate on a bi-weekly basis. Parents of older students should be contacted at least once a term. Parents are encouraged to keep track of their son's or daughter's unit completion progress, and to encourage them to do homework. When a student falls behind, parents should be consulted and work with the TA in prescribing controls to help the student get back on track.

Parents are invited for interviews with their son's or daughter's TA at the end of each reporting period. They no longer meet with the student's subject teachers. In addition, parent nights have been held each year of the Project for TAs to meet with the parents of their TA-group students together.

Parents have also had the opportunity to get involved in Project Excellence through various advisory committees, the Parent Advisory Committee, the Native Advisory Committee, and an ad hoc Graduate Parent Advisory Committee.

8.3. FINDINGS FOR PARENT ROLE IMPLEMENTATION

We analyzed three dimensions of the parent role in Project Excellence: (1) parent involvement with teachers; (2) parent involvement with students; and (3) parent involvement with the Project as a whole. The parent survey included both fact and opinion items related to expected parent behaviours and outcomes on these three dimensions. The findings are reviewed here (see Appendix I for item by item distribution of responses).

These data indicate that roughly half the parents surveyed communicate regularly with TAs, and that a majority (77%) have talked with a TA about concerns related to their child's performance. Caution in interpreting these data is warranted, since TAs are not expected to call parents of older students as frequently as those of younger students. Moreover, parents responding to the survey are probably biased towards greater involvement than those that did not, which make up about 40 per cent of the parent population.

These data alone do not necessarily indicate a need for change in current patterns of parent-TA communication. Parent opinions about the "outcomes" of communication with TAs and teachers shed some light.

8.3.1. Parent Involvement with Teachers

ITEM	YES	NO
1. I talk with my child's TA every 2 to 4 weeks about my child's progress, even when there are no problems to discuss	48%	48%*
2. I receive written progress reports from my child's TA, in addition to report cards.	50%	48%
3. The TA and I have talked about problems my child is having at school.	77%	21%
4. The TA and I have talked about situations outside of school that might be affecting my child's school work.	46%	52%
6. I have attended a parent interview THIS school year with my child's TA.	47%	53%

* Percentages calculated on the basis of 184 returned surveys. Figures may not total 100% due to non-responses for some items (see Appendix I frequency distribution).

ITEM	AGREE*	UNSURE	DISAGREE
20. I communicate with my child's TA frequently enough.	73%	6%	21%
27. My child's teacher advisor and I work as a team in decisions about my child's education.	58%	9%	32%
25. I understand what teacher advisors do in Project Excellence.	75%	11%	14%
24. I understand what teachers do in Project Excellence.	47%	29%	24%

(* We have combined survey responses marked "Strongly agree" with "Agree", and responses marked "Strongly disagree" with "Disagree")

Responses to these items indicate that a majority of the parents responding to the survey feel they have sufficient communication with TAs, that they understand the TA role, and feel they are working in partnership with the TA. There is a substantial minority, however, that expresses a need for better communication with and knowledge about the TA role.

In our interviews we encountered three categories of parents: (1) those who talked often with the TA; (2) those who talked infrequently with the TA, but did not feel a need for more communication; and (3) those who talked infrequently with the TA and wished for closer communication. The interview data confirm that some TAs do not maintain ongoing contact with parents of all their TA students, even for students in difficulty at school.

The fact that parent contact with the school is mainly with the TA is reflected in the fact that about half the parents do not fully understand the role of "teachers" in Project Excellence.

This suggests a need for more information to parents about the subject teacher role, perhaps by creating opportunities for parents to communicate with their child's teachers, not just with the TA. The importance of parent understanding of teacher, teacher advisor, and student roles in Project Excellence was supported in our interviews. Some parents commented on the difficulty of interpreting student complaints about the system, due to their own unfamiliarity with the way it works, or is supposed to work.

8.3.2. Parent Involvement with Students

A majority of the 184 parent survey respondents do report active involvement with their son or daughter in decisions about schoolwork. A significant minority, however, reports little involvement in monitoring progress and in course selection.

ITEM	YES	NO
5. I take part in decisions about which courses my child takes.	68%	31%
10. I personally keep track of what units my child is working on.	70%	29%
11. I encourage my child to do homework on a regular basis.	88%	12%
12. My child and I have good honest discussions about her/his progress in school.	90%	10%

Most of the parents interviewed said they talked weekly, if not daily, to their child about school work. They monitored student progress by asking their son or daughter to show them the green slips signifying successful unit completion. Some kept the green slips or progress charts posted on the refrigerator door.

Parent opinion data help clarify needs for improvement in parent-student interaction.

ITEM	AGREE	UNSURE	DISAGREE
21. I am more involved in my child's education than when she/he attended a traditional school.	48%	11%	40%
22. I am more aware of how well my child is doing now than when she/he attended a traditional school.	44%	14%	41%
23. I understand what my child is expected to do in Project Excellence.	78%	11%	11%
26. I know what to do to help my child succeed in Project Excellence.	53%	28%	17%

Project Excellence has had a positive impact on the degree of parent involvement and awareness of student progress for about half the parents responding to the survey. While these parents may only constitute about a third of all parents in the school, the overall increase in parent involvement is certainly a positive outcome for the Project (OSIS, section 1.1). These findings do not imply that the other parents are less involved, only that their level of involvement has not changed as a result of the Project.

The findings also indicate that parents are generally aware of what students are expected to do in Project Excellence. They are less certain of what they can do to help their child succeed. There is a definite need within the Project to provide more information and assistance to parents about ways that they can help students succeed. The data further suggest that there are knowledgeable parents who might be able to educate other parents about effective ways to help Project Excellence students.

Parent interviews tended to confirm the frustration some parents experience trying to motivate and assist students who fall behind. Our interview sample included parents of students who have not been very successful in the Project. Several said that arguments with the child about schoolwork had caused friction in the family. Some said the system did not work well for students who needed more structure, and that they did not have the skills to provide that structure. They were used to the old system, where teachers, not parents, had the main responsibility to motivate students. These parents were "tired" of trying to get students to do work they were unwilling to do. Parents with more than one child in the system said that they learned what to do from the first one, and were usually stricter with the second in terms of a schedule of work.

8.3.3. Parent Involvement with the Project

In the survey, parents were asked about their involvement in decision making concerning Project Excellence. Two-thirds (67%) of the 184 responding to the survey said they had attended one or more parent meetings about Project Excellence. Ten per cent of the respondents were, or had been members of a parent advisory group. The level of participation in Project meetings seems reasonable for these parents, but may not be as high for parents who did not return the survey.

Parents were less positive about their participation in the decision to adopt Project Excellence.

ITEM	AGREE	UNSURE	DISAGREE
28. I knew enough about Project Excellence when I agreed to enrol my child.	34%	11%	50%

The fact that two-thirds of the survey respondents believe they did not have enough information initially about Project Excellence indicates a continuing need for outreach to parents new to the school. It also supports earlier recommendations to other school boards to provide more information and opportunities for parental involvement in the adoption and preparation stages of implementing a system of education like Project Excellence.

In our interviews, parents explained that they understood how traditional schools worked from their own experience, while in Project Excellence, they were learning about the system like everyone else. They also reported that meetings for parents at the school tended to focus on the benefits of the Project, without necessarily giving them specific ideas as to how they could help their child at home.

8.3.4. Analysis of Parent Role Implementation by Subgroup

We compared the responses of different subgroups of parents. The most consistent differences were found in comparisons between those who think the system works well for their child versus those that do not; parents of students who plan to attend university or college versus others; and parents who prefer Project Excellence versus those who prefer a traditional school.

Items were noted for which the differences between groups were statistically significant at the 10 per cent level (i.e., differences likely to occur by chance only 10 times out of 100). Relevant findings are noted below.

Degree of implementation of the parent role is strongly correlated with parental perceptions of Project impact on students. Parents who agree with the statement "the system of education works well for my child" are more likely to report parent behaviours and outcomes consistent with Project ideals than those who do not. These parents report more frequent communication with TAs; attend more Project meetings; are more aware of their child's progress than before; feel more involved in their child's education than before; have a better understanding of the roles that students' teachers and teacher advisors are expected to play; think they know how to help their child succeed; and say they knew enough about the Project when their son or daughter enrolled. This group of parents is more likely to say their child's marks, study habits, and attitudes towards school have all improved.

Parents who say their child is not succeeding in the Project communicate less frequently with TAs, though they are more likely to talk with TAs about situations outside of school influencing student performance. They go to fewer Project meetings; do not report any change in awareness and involvement in their child's education; lack knowledge about student, teacher, and teacher advisor roles; are uncertain how to help their child succeed; and think they should have known more about the Project initially.

This same pattern of differences is found in comparisons between parents who prefer Project Excellence (50%) and those who prefer a traditional school (45%, and 2% "unsure"). Parents who prefer Project Excellence report behaviours and outcomes more consistent with Project expectations.

It is difficult to assess the relationship between parental involvement and student success in Project Excellence. Our findings indicate that students and parents who think the system works well tend to behave according to Project expectations. The behaviours reported by students and parents who do not think the system works well are less consistent with Project expectations. This suggests that in order for students to succeed in Project Excellence, the teachers, the students, and the parents must *ALL* strive for better implementation of their expected roles.

Degree of parental involvement is also correlated with the postsecondary education plans of students. Parents of students planning to go to university or college are more likely than parents of students with other plans to talk with TAs, participate in course selection, attend Project meetings, monitor their child's progress, and talk with their child about schoolwork. Parents of students not planning on further education are more likely to receive written as opposed to oral communications with TAs.

8.4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PARENT ROLE

The recommendations offered here follow from the findings presented above, and in the evaluation of teacher advisor and teacher role implementation in chapter 5. Additional recommendations concerning the parent role appear in chapter 5.

(23) *Recommendation:* The responsibility for building effective parent involvement rests with parents as well as TAs. We recommend that a task force of parents and TAs be established through the Parent Advisory Committee to explore ways of ameliorating the problems currently hindering frequent and effective communication between parents and TAs.

(24) *Recommendation:* Many parents do not have a good understanding of the subject teacher role in Project Excellence, and have little opportunity for contact with teachers in their "teacher role". Teacher advisors are aware of a student's unit progress, but may not be able to comment substantively about a student's mastery or difficulties in specific subjects. We recommend that the administration and staff reinstate opportunities for parents to consult with subject teachers about their child's progress.

(25) *Recommendation:* In order to increase community awareness of the subject teacher role in Project Excellence, we recommend that the Parent Advisory Committee of E.S.C.H.S. consider ways of demonstrating positive public support for subject teachers, recognizing their efforts to provide students with a good education.

(26) *Recommendation:* Parents need access to additional assistance in ways of motivating and helping their sons and daughters, and in communicating effectively with TAs and the administration. We recommend that the board and administration consider establishing a school community liaison position at E.S.C.H.S. The person in this position would act as a resource person and advocate for parents. He or she might organize such things as "self-help groups" for parents seeking ideas to help students or to improve communications with TAs, a telephone network of volunteer parents willing to share their practical wisdom with other parents, and other "in-service" opportunities for parents of students in Project Excellence.

8.5. CHANGES IN THE PARENT ROLE

As reported earlier (section 8.3.2.), about half the parent survey respondents say they are more involved in their child's education, and more aware of their child's performance at school, than before Project Excellence.

In our parent interviews, we asked parents to describe the changes in their involvement in their son's or daughter's education. The following captions and quotes illustrate their responses.

Little difference in parent involvement with student or school

> "Our own involvement with the school isn't much different from when they were in public school. We have always shown an interest and did what seemed to be needed."

> "Not that much really. When they are young they have parent nights to go talk to teachers. You're expected to go . I've never had a report card interview."
>
> "No real difference. We give her the help that she needs. She works on her own."

Parents have more frequent communication with school personnel

> "I wasn't there as much as Grade 10. I was going four times a year for parent-teacher nights. But in between I didn't hear as much. I didn't get involved that much with teachers."

Parents have less contact with subject teachers

> "At that time there were no TAs, so you had to go see them all."

Some parents feel more pressure to assist students with their schoolwork

> "To be of value to our kid's education we have to know what their units are all about. Parents have to refresh their memories. In the other system, less pressure was put on the parents to learn about education."
>
> (Parent feels)..."stress over getting units done. The traditional system was structured with assignments. My son doesn't know how to organize himself to work on units. I can't guarantee he will do the work."

Some parents have become more involved in education policy issues

> (interviewer notes) The father says he is more involved now than before. He thinks about it, wants to understand it. He is more open, more interested in education now. He wants to get involved in a committee dealing with francophone education.

We were surprised that apart from general references to increased communication with teachers, the parents interviewed did not talk about regular telephone contacts with teacher advisors as a major change in parent-teacher relations. This may be because telephone contacts had become so commonplace by the third year of implementation that parents no longer thought of them as "a change". It may also reflect the fact that about two-thirds of the parents interviewed (9) said they do not get calls from their son's or daughter's TA on a bi-weekly or monthly basis.

While the overall increase in parent-teacher communication under Project Excellence represents a positive outcome for the Project as a whole, the focus of that communication is not always positive. Parents of some students who were academically successful under the old system, suddenly found themselves confronted with situations in which their sons or daughters were not making progress at school. Their increased contact with school personnel was focussed on the negative consequences of the Project for their child's secondary school progress.

Another dimension of the change for parents, is their own sense of increased accountability for their son's or daughter's education. The fact that TAs and the administration challenge parents to monitor the student's schoolwork, to help motivate students, and to help organize their studying, has been a new and frustrating experience for some parents of students having difficulty in the system.

CHAPTER 9

SUPPORT STAFF ROLES IN PROJECT EXCELLENCE

This chapter examines the roles of secretaries and of resource centre assistants in Project Excellence. The job description, the nature of the change, and issues and concerns specific to each group are presented. Data for this chapter were obtained from a group interview with school secretaries, and from a sample of six resource centre assistants (RCAs). The RCAs were selected for variation in department size, French and English, and length of time with the Project.

9.1. THE SECRETARY ROLE

9.1.1. Description of Secretarial Role

There are six secretaries in the school with work allocated as follows:

- One is the Principal's Administrative Assistant and Executive Secretary. She is in charge of the other secretaries, and does work for the two vice-principals as required.
- One is secretary for the guidance department and maintains the school's computerized records on the VAX computer system. The others work on the VAX system when necessary.
- The four other secretaries work for varying numbers of teacher advisors (TAs), depending upon the additional special duties assigned to them. One secretary works for seven TAs and types "The Communicator", a daily bulletin for students and staff. Another secretary works for five TAs and is responsible for budget. The other two secretaries each work for nine TAs.

The general responsibilities of secretaries are typical of most school offices. They include filing, typing, copying, telephone, and recording attendance of students.

The four secretaries who work for TAs each schedule one half-day per week in the copy room. Everything "goes into the basket" and they copy whatever needs to be copied. A major responsibility of these four secretaries is phoning parents every morning for the TAs to check on students who are absent. They are required to do this after every regular attendance check and spot check. In the old system, there was only one "attendance secretary".

Although there is no formal job description, the secretaries report that they understand clearly what their responsibilities are. When Project Excellence was initiated, they sat down together and divided up duties and workload. As a group, they talk over any changes in circumstances that require modification of their responsibilities.

9.1.2. The Nature of Change for Secretaries

Most of the secretaries worked in the previous system and were involved in the initiation phase of the Project. Their major contribution to Project development was typing and duplicating units. There was an enormous amount of typing during the summer of 1985, as teachers were attempting to get ten or more units per course on the shelves by September. The secretaries agreed to work overtime on a rotating basis, and were aided by nine extra typists.

Secretaries found that working for predetermined groups of TAs required them to learn what work should receive priority. The typing of examinations was a big task before Project Excellence. Now, multiple versions of tests are kept on file for use at the end of each unit, making for some reduction in this responsibility. However, there is more typing of course revisions (over 300 courses in the system). Course typing load varies due to differences in the nature and length of the units as developed by teachers.

The secretaries see several advantages in the present system. They have a greater variety of tasks now, and like it better. They have greater interaction with teachers and are able to build a more personal relationship. They have more responsibility now, but do not depend so much on the head secretary as before. The secretaries "do backup" for the VAX system, and rotate some other duties, depending upon who needs help. Consequently, there is more flexibility now.

There have been a number of changes and some improvements in the secretary role within the Project during the first three years. There were many little "emergencies" at first - the copier, typing, computer use, and much to learn in a short time. During the first two years the secretaries were stationed close to the teacher advisors whom they served. This resulted in much running up and down stairs to copy and complete work. In year three all secretaries moved downstairs to the central office. For them, this has been an improvement. They find that when all are working together in one area, they can help each other more effectively.

Another change in responsibility involved the processing and recording of "green slips" which are given to a student each time he or she successfully completes a unit. Secretaries had from 100 to 150 green slips to process each day. This caused many problems with extra work, and the slips going through too many hands. After review, this function was turned over to the TAs, who were closer to the situation, and had fewer slips per person to process.

9.1.3. Concerns and Issues about the Secretary Role

Secretaries have two major concerns: telephoning parents and the amount of "running around from one end of the building to the other." The secretaries feel that parents often do not listen to them or take them seriously when they telephone about absenteeism or other problems. They contend that the TAs would have more clout. This function of the secretary role is new for all but the previous attendance secretary, and their discomfort with telephoning parents is understandable. In our opinion, however, shifting routine attendance follow-up to the TAs would represent an unnecessary addition to the teacher workload. We recommend that the administration, in collaboration with secretaries and TAs, clarify policies and procedures for following up absenteeism. Agreement is needed as to the circumstances under which responsibility for contacting a parent about absences and tardiness could and should shift from secretaries to TAs. Problem cases might also be dealt with by the school-community liaison person proposed in chapter 8 (Recommendation 26).

Secretaries also report that the location of the photocopy machine at the other end of the building is inefficient, in terms of the volume of copying required in the Project and the loss of secretarial time travelling to and fro. They wish it could be located closer to their office area.

A further difficulty hindering secretarial efficiency in Project Excellence is the fact that word processors purchased for the Project are not really powerful enough for the volume of work they do. Hard disk rather than floppy disk systems are preferable. In addition, the printers are not all the same type. If the whole office were on the same system, delays that are sometimes encountered now could be avoided. We recommend that the school and central administration investigate these concerns and possible solutions, in light of current and anticipated word processing needs for the Project.

Finally, secretaries do not feel that they are always consulted in decisions which concern them. "We're always left behind and told two months later." Although we did not check out the validity of this concern, we support the position that input from secretaries and other support staff on decisions relating to their work is a reasonable expectation.

9.1.4. Recommendations for the Secretary Role

(27) *Recommendation:* **We recommend that the administration, in collaboration with secretaries and TAs, clarify policies and procedures for following up absenteeism.**

(28) *Recommendation:* **We recommend that the school and central administration investigate secretarial concerns about and solutions to current and anticipated word processing equipment needs.**

9.2. THE RESOURCE CENTRE ASSISTANT ROLE

9.2.1. Description of the Resource Centre Assistant Role

Resource Centre Assistants (RCAs) are employed to work in the centres to help with organizational tasks related to keeping the centres running. They are assigned to a specific resource centre, work 20 hours a week, are paid minimum wage, and are supervised by the department head for that centre. The RCAs are not teaching assistants.

There are five responsibilities common to RCAs:

(a) Making sure that the unit divider shelves are filled with the appropriate printed instructional units, and photocopying replacement units as needed.

(b) Checking out units to students.

(c) Checking out books and equipment to students, and sending out reminders for return when necessary.

(d) Processing completion slips after courses are completed satisfactorily, and sending them to the guidance department, to the students concerned, and to the TAs.

(e) Keeping a running list of supplies and equipment needs, and making a year-end inventory.

(f) Most RCAs record student marks and process the student green slips, but some do not if teachers prefer to do this themselves.

Informally, most RCAs also encourage and help students when they can, and help with discipline to a moderate degree when teachers are out of the centre. These are not "responsibilities" as such, but were frequently mentioned as part of "what we do".

The RCAs interviewed listed a variety of additional tasks which were not part of the common job description. These variations depended on the type of centre they worked in, their arrangements with the head and teachers in that centre, and/or the special abilities of the RCA. For example, some centres have their own resource libraries, and the RCAs may catalogue books. RCAs in centres like art, commercial, and science have duties related to maintenance of the specialized equipment and materials in those centres. The amount of record keeping done by RCAs varies considerably from centre to centre and teacher to teacher. Some are asked to record attendance at seminars, in addition to recording student marks.

9.2.2. The Nature of Change for Resource Centre Assistants

There were no resource centre assistants prior to Project Excellence, so they could only speak of changes in their role since the Project began.

The first RCAs were hired in June of 1985. They did not begin work until the beginning of school in the fall and, thus, had no involvement in initial Project development. The RCAs received no training for their role, other than in the use of a microcomputer for record keeping in some centres.

The RCAs who have been with the Project since the beginning report that their initial duties were largely to hand out units and books and to record marks. They saw themselves as developing a new role and had to feel their way. They say they are "more organized" now, and have assumed more responsibilities, including use of computers, more extensive recording of pupil marks and progress, proofreading revised units and tests, and keeping inventories of centre supplies. Those who began work as RCAs in 1986 report little change from then to the present time.

As the RCA role was being developed during the first year of Project Excellence, RCAs tended to feel overwhelmed by the students and new responsibilities. Some stated that they initially were afraid of making mistakes. Adjustments had to be made as the year progressed. For example, both teachers and RCAs were recording marks at first. This created confusion until responsibilities for mark recording were clearly designated in each centre. They also experienced initial problems knowing where to find things and where to put them away. Discipline was another issue at first. Some students paid no attention to the RCAs, and refused to show their I.D. cards when asked. This is no longer the case. The RCAs said students were more polite now.

Overall, the RCAs seemed settled into job routines by year three. They reported no major problems in their role. The routinization of the role is reflected in the fact that some of the RCAs began putting together a manual describing the duties of each RCA, so that future substitutes or replacements would have a resource to help them learn the role.

9.2.3. Concerns and Issues About the RCA Role

The one general area of concern mentioned by the RCAs involves the low wages, in light of length of service, increased responsibilities, and periodic overtime requirements. This concern deserves administrative attention, but falls outside the purview of our evaluation mandate. Like the secretaries, the RCAs also express a desire for more opportunities to communicate with the administration about work-related concerns.

PART D: CURRICULUM AND STUDENT OUTCOMES

CHAPTER 10

CURRICULUM ANALYSIS

10.1. COURSE MAINTENANCE

10.1.1. Course Maintenance Findings

Course maintenance is not exactly a "student outcome", but it is a desirable "outcome *for* students" (and *for* teachers). Under the old system of education, the staff at E.S.C.H.S. found it increasingly difficult to maintain courses in a context of declining enrolment and increasing curriculum requirements. The declining enrolment situation was heightened by the passage of Bill 30 and the separate school board decision to create a French-language high school. The loss of students implied a loss of teaching staff and fewer students per course.

The implementation of the Ministry of Education's new curriculum policy, OSIS, created a further strain on course enrolments by encouraging school boards to offer courses at all three academic levels (advanced, general, and basic) across the curriculum (OSIS, section 4.6). While many courses at E.S.C.H.S. were already offered at all three levels, others had to be changed from "open" status to unique courses. This further reduced the number of students enrolled per course in some subjects.

When the idea to implement Project Excellence took hold, the administrators and staff were searching for an educationally sound way to maintain courses in reponse to these pressures. The traditional means of coping with course enrolment and staffing problems was to delete or combine courses. Students at different ability levels, grade levels, and/or with different language preferences were often lumped together with one teacher in a traditional classroom setting. While bilevel and multigrade classes are permissible in small secondary schools under OSIS (sections 5.5, 5.14), this "solution" is very difficult to implement without sacrificing the goal of providing programs tailored to the needs of different groups of students.

A second option was to cut departments. The debate usually centred on cutting practical departments, like technical and family studies. The administration resisted because the elimination of non-academic courses was unfair to the large numbers of students not bound for university in general and basic level courses. Project Excellence was viewed as a solution to the problem of course maintenance and the desire to preserve high standards of instruction and individualized attention.

As part of our evaluation we decided to investigate whether or not the school goal of maintaining courses despite low enrolments was, in fact, being achieved under Project Excellence. The following hypothesis was developed for this analysis:

> Students can take any course under Project Excellence regardless of how many students are enrolled. Courses are not cancelled or combined due to low student enrolment. Students experience no timetabling conflicts that prevent them from taking courses in the language and level of difficulty they want.

This hypothesis was put to the test in the following ways. First, we reviewed available records of courses offered, deleted, and combined for the year prior to Project Excellence to see how extensive "the problem" really was. Second, we calculated course enrolment statistics for the second and third years of the Project to see how many low enrolment courses were actually being maintained. Third, we compared course codes in the course calendars for 1985/86, 1986/87, 1987/88, and 1988/89 to see what kinds of course additions and deletions were occurring. We followed up any course changes with the appropriate department heads to find out the reasons for changes in course offerings under Project Excellence. And fourth, we included items in our questionnaire to all students asking whether they experienced any timetabling problems getting the courses they want in the language and level of difficulty desired.

The figures in table 10-1 compare data on course combinations and deletions for the year preceding Project Excellence to the first four years of the Project.[6] Pupil enrolment and staffing statistics are included to help interpret the significance of these numbers.

---

[6] The 1988/89 course calendar was published in the spring of 1988 when we were gathering these data.

Table 10-1

Course Deletions Before and After Project Excellence

YEAR	PUPILS	TEACHERS	COURSE DEMANDS	COURSE CANCELLATIONS	COURSE COMBINATIONS
Pre-PE					
1984	542[7]	42	341	70	100
**********	**********	**********	**********	**********	**********
Post-PE					
1985	574	36[8]	345	0	0
1986	529	36	330	8	0
1987	482	33	324	8	0
1988	(Data Unavailable)			34	0

Table 10-2 presents enrolment statistics for courses in Project Excellence during the 1986/87 and 1987/88 school years. The 1986/87 figures were calculated by the administration that year. We calculated comparable statistics for 1987/88 from a February 1988 printout of student enrolment by course.[9]

From the data presented, it is evident that under Project Excellence, the Principal and staff at E.S.C.H.S. are indeed able to maintain a large number of courses with very low enrolments. Despite the substantial loss of staff from 1983 to 1988, and the decline in enrolment, the number of courses offered to students has remained essentially the same, between 300 and 350. This is being accomplished without having to place students in

---

[7] Enrolment figures in this analysis include students enrolled as adults in the school's adult education program.

[8] Staff figures under Project Excellence do not include the Section 16 teacher.

[9] Discrepancies in the number of courses between tables 10-1 and 10-2 have to do with the time of year the data were gathered. Since students in Project Excellence can enrol in new courses any time during the school year, the number of courses offered grows as the year progresses.

Table 10-2

Project Excellence Enrolment Statistics 1986[10] and 1987[11]

YEAR	COURSES WITH 1-5 PUPILS	COURSES WITH 6-9 PUPILS	COURSES WITH 10+ PUPILS	TOTAL COURSES
School				
1986	141	43	117	301
	46.8%	14.3%	38.9%	100%
1987	157	47	104	308
	50.9%	15.3%	33.8%	100%
English				
1986	55	35	98	188
	29.3%	18.6%	52.1%	100%
1987	81	34	95	210
	38.6%	16.2%	45.2%	100%
French				
1986	86	8	19	113
	76.1%	7.0%	16.8%	100%
1987	76	13	9	98
	77.6%	13.3%	9.2%	100%

heterogeneous ability groups, mixed grade levels, or mixed language sections, for purposes of group instruction. Group instruction, when it occurs, is provided in small group seminars only to those students enrolled in specific courses. The ability of this school to maintain a comprehensive array of programs in French and English across most subject areas, at three levels of difficulty, in both academic and practical subjects must be regarded as a successful outcome of Project Excellence.

Although the numbers provided indicate that many low enrolment courses have been maintained under Project Excellence, it is not the case that no courses have been deleted from the course calendar. The following reasons were given for course deletions under

---

[10] Based on September Report 1986

[11] Based on printout of course enrolments, February 1988

Project Excellence:

(1) Some courses that existed under pre-1984 ministry curriculum guidelines were dropped or replaced in compliance with new guidelines released under OSIS.

(2) Some courses offered under the old system were not developed and offered initially, pending the expected release of new ministry subject guidelines under OSIS.

(3) Some developed courses were dropped from the calendar due to lack of enrolment over two or three years.

(4) Some courses were advertised to see if there was enough student interest to justify creating a course. Student interest was not judged high enough to justify the teacher time required to actually develop the courses, so the course was deleted from the calendar the following year.

(5) Some courses have been deleted due to continued staffing reductions, because there are no longer teachers with appropriate qualifications and time to teach these courses and to develop or revise the units.

The above comments reveal that ongoing course deletions are not entirely a function of Project Excellence. Course changes under OSIS are the source of some deletions. Note too that while low student enrolment in *existing* courses no longer results in course deletions or combinations (no student enrolment over a two-year period does), low student enrolment continues to function as a disincentive to the development of *new* course options. The amount of labour required to develop a new 20-unit learning guide is simply too much for teachers to casually create new courses for a smattering of students.

The most important finding revealed by this analysis is the increasing tendency to delete courses from the course calendar because of continued staffing reductions. Courses in the French-language section have been hardest hit. For the 1988/89 school year, French-language courses were deleted from family studies and music, and consideration was given to deleting them from the commercial area as well. The loss of francophone students and faculty to the separate school system from 1985 onward created a situation in which there were no qualified French-speaking teachers to develop, revise, and teach French options in these subject areas. French courses in most of these areas were initially developed for the Project, but the persons who created them left and were not replaced. There was no one to teach these courses in French. Furthermore, the quality of these courses was suspect, since they had not benefited from ongoing revisions and refinement throughout the first three years of the Project.

This situation casts a different light on the anticipated and actual impact of Project Excellence on course maintenance in a situation of declining enrolment and increasing curriculum requirements. The point is that students cannot be expected to do all the work in the learning guides on their own. It is imperative that there be teachers qualified in the subject area (and language) available for consultation. Furthermore, the continued quality of the learning guides depends on ongoing review and revisions by teachers with expertise in the subject material.

In sum, it is true that the principal and staff at E.S.C.H.S. have been able to maintain large numbers of low enrolment courses under the system of Project Excellence, courses that otherwise might well have been deleted or combined. On the other hand, it is also evident that there is a limit to how far the staff can be stretched to cover all the subjects and courses desired. In the face of ongoing staff reductions, courses that no longer benefit from the availability of qualified subject teachers face extinction.

Under the present circumstances, maintenance of the French-language section is and will continue to be in jeopardy. The reasons for the problems currently experienced have more to do with Bill 30 and the creation of a French-language separate secondary school than with Project Excellence. If E.S.C.H.S. is to continue to offer a bilingual curriculum, then a policy and plan for recruiting bilingual teachers to replace any future departing teachers should be adopted. Consideration could be given, particularly in some of the practical subjects (technical, commercial, family studies) to approaching the separate school system to see if arrangements could be made for Project Excellence students to take some of those courses in the French-language high school, while continuing to take the majority of their courses at E.S.C.H.S.

More generally, the continued capacity of Project Excellence to maintain a comprehensive array of courses will depend on the school's ability to attract and keep teachers who are qualified to teach in more than one subject area.

The preceding analysis shows that, under a system like Project Excellence, a school with a fairly small number of staff can maintain an equivalent number of courses as a larger school without resorting to multilevel and multigrade classes. Project Excellence, however, is not invulnerable to the continued effects of declining enrolment. In order for the project to work, a certain level of staffing must be maintained, and maintaining staff requires administrative action beyond the Project per se.

At E.S.C.H.S., threatened staff cuts were warded off during the second and third years of Project Excellence by initiating an adult education program and co-operative education. Schools contemplating adoption of the Project Excellence model of education should take care not to rely strictly on this system of program organization to maintain a full range of course options. Additional measures have to be taken to protect the system from continued staffing cuts that might threaten course maintenance.

10.1.2 Recommendations Concerning Course Maintenance

(29) *Recommendation:* A policy and plan for recruiting more francophone teachers with the capacity to teach in English and French to replace any future departing teachers should be adopted.

(30) *Recommendation:* A policy and plan for recruiting teachers qualified and prepared to teach in more than one subject area should be adopted.

(31) *Recommendation:* The school and board should provide professional development assistance to E.S.C.H.S. teachers who express an interest and willingness to take courses and develop competence in subject areas other than their primary speciality.

10.2. MINISTRY GUIDELINES AND E.S.C.H.S. COURSES

The teachers in Project Excellence have developed more than 300 written courses for students to complete. Several questions about these courses come readily to mind. Do they clearly and adequately respond to the requirements in the ministry's curriculum guidelines? With the Project emphasis on the completion of written course units (20 per course), is too much emphasis placed on the acquisition of knowledge and skills at the expense of the development of positive attitudes and worthwhile principles? Since the courses depend so heavily on reading and writing activities, does the development of listening and speaking suffer? Are there sufficient, suitable opportunities for experiences in personal interaction, such as teacher with student, students in pairs, and students with groups of students? To respond to such questions, we made a thorough study of a broad sample of 24 E.S.C.H.S. courses in relation to the requirements of the appropriate ministry curriculum guidelines and the requirements of OSIS.

10.2.1. Description of Curriculum Sample

The intent of our analysis was to arrive at reasonable judgements about the curriculum as a whole under Project Excellence. Due to the number of courses involved, it was impossible to analyze them all or even a statistically representative sample. Therefore, we opted for a selected sample and maximized variation on the following factors likely to influence curriculum content and approach: subject area, grade level, level of difficulty, and language. Our sampling criteria and the actual distribution of courses obtained on these factors are presented in Appendix J.

10.2.2. Method of Analysis and Rating Scales

Each of the courses selected was analyzed in relation to five types of expectations and requirements set out in each relevant Ministry of Education guideline. The five types of expectations and requirements are listed below.

(a) Fulfilment of the aims described in the guidelines.

(b) Fulfilment of the objectives listed for each sample course analyzed.

(c) Coverage of the prescribed course content, including skills and attitudes where identified.

(d) Fulfilment or response to the "criteria for evaluation" of the course as provided in ministry guidelines.

(e) Fulfilment of the seven technical requirements for each school course as prescribed in OSIS, section 4.8, "Courses of Study at the School".

The ministry guideline *requirements* leave no doubt as to their meaning. We have interpreted those prescribed activities, procedures, content, and outcomes that are preceded by the words "must" or "shall" to be "requirements". Wherever the recommended activities, procedures, content and outcomes are preceded by the word "should" or an expression such as "it is expected", we have interpreted them to be important "expectations" very close to requirements. Consequently, these two concepts (expectations and requirements) have been grouped together for the first five categories or criteria evaluated in table 10-3.

The analysis summarized in table 10-3 rates the extent to which the written E.S.C.H.S. courses respond to or fulfil the ministry guidelines expectations and requirements. It does not rate the effectiveness of the teaching/learning process or the quality of the outcomes (see chapters 12 and 13).

Since most of the factors analyzed are requirements, a high standard has been set for the rating scale used. It is noted that the number of expectations and requirements in different subjects and categories varies widely. The proportions met or fulfilled have been converted to percentages as the first step in determining the rating. For example, if nine out of ten expectations and requirements are met, the proportion is 90 per cent. The rating scale is described below.

Ratings for Expectations/Requirements	Interpretations
5	All Ministry of Education requirements and expectations responded to or dealt with by the course lessons and assignments. A top quality program.
4	80 to 99% of expectations and requirements responded to or dealt with by the written course units. A good to very good program.
3	70 to 79% of the expectations and requirements responded to or dealt with by the course. This level is interpreted as a satisfactory standard.
2	60 to 69% of expectations and requirements responded to or dealt with. This standard is unsatisfactory, and requires immediate attention.
1	0 to 59% of expectations and requirements responded to or dealt with.

The ratings produced by the analysis of the 24 sample courses examined are summarized in table 10-3. Results are recorded in columns three to eight for the five categories of expectations and requirements studied.

Ratings for the analysis of methodology used in E.S.C.H.S. courses are contained in the second to last (ninth) column in table 10-3. Since the ministry guidelines usually present their recommendations concerning methodology in the form of suggestions from which teachers may choose, a less stringent rating scale is called for when compared with expectations/requirements.

TABLE 10-3
Summary Analysis of E.S.C.H.S. Written Courses

Subject Areas and Groupings Analyzed		Number of Courses Analyzed	Average Rating for Categories Evaluated					Subtotal Require-ments	Subtotal Method-ology	Totals
			Aims	Objectives	Course Content	Ministry's Criteria for Evaluation	Technical Factors Required by OSIS			
1	English	3	5.00	4.67	4.33	4.00	4.00	4.40	3.67	4.28
2	Français	2	2.50	1.00	2.50	3.00	3.00	2.40	2.50	2.42
3	Mathematics	3	4.67	4.33	4.00	3.67	4.33	4.20	3.67	4.11
4	Science	5	4.00	4.20	4.00	4.00	3.20	3.88	4.00	3.90
5	Social Studies	4	4.50	4.50	4.00	4.25	3.25	4.10	4.75	4.21
6	The Arts	3	2.67	4.33	2.33	4.67	2.33	3.27	4.00	3.39
	Physical & Health Edn. & Guidance									
7	Business and Technological Studies	4	3.25	3.75	3.50	3.75	4.00	3.65	4.00	3.71
	Aggregates for All Courses	24	93.00	96.00	87.00	95.00	87.00	458.00	90.00	548.00
	Averages	X	3.88	4.00	3.63	3.96	3.63	3.82	3.75	3.81

1 These five categories are expectations and requirements that are prescribed in ministry guidelines.
2 Most ministry guidelines make suggestions only re methodology.

Rating Scale for Expectations/Requirements

5-	All responded to or dealt with
4-	80 to 89% responded to or dealth with
3-	70 to 79% responded to or dealth with
2-	60 to 69% responded to or dealth with

Rating Scale for Methodology

5-	85 to 100% utilized
4-	75 to 84% utilized
3-	65 to 74% utilized
2-	50 to 64% utilized

It was not our intent to evaluate the work of individual teachers, rather to make judgements about the school curriculum overall. Thus, we have grouped the sample courses by subject area clusters in table 10-3. The sixth grouping, art, physical and health education, and guidance, is quite obviously not a natural grouping, whereas the other subject areas are. This group of three was arranged to avoid singling out any one teacher.

10.2.3. Findings for Guideline Requirements Fulfilled in Project Excellence Learning Guides

Aims. We find fulfilment of the aims to be quite well done in most subject areas. Of the 24 sample courses reported in table 10-3, five appear to have responded to all aims recommended by the ministry. All other courses except three have fulfilled all but one or all but a part of one of the aims prescribed. The average rating of 3.88, in our judgement, represented a reasonably good standard overall. In our ratings, we are interpreting "4" or higher as a good standard, and a rating of "3" as satisfactory.

Objectives. Fulfilment of objectives is very well done in all but three courses, and one of these is rated satisfactory. Others are rated "4" or higher. Objectives typically appear at the beginning of units and should be easy for students to understand. For all but two courses, the stated objectives respond to all the aims that the courses fulfil. If an aim is not fulfilled, the relevant objectives do not usually appear in the written units.

Content, Topics, Skills, and Attitudes Taught. For coverage of course content, seventeen of the 24 courses receive a rating of "4"; three a rating of "3" which is satisfactory; and four courses are below "3". On the whole, the average rating of 3.63 is satisfactory. The depth of treatment, in many cases, goes beyond the requirements. Extra topics are often included beyond those expected or required. In some cases, topics have been substituted which appear to respond as well to the needs of the students as the topics replaced. A number of ministry guidelines encourage this type of flexibility. These findings should allay some of the concerns about the impact on content of reducing unit length during the first two years of the Project (chapter 4).

The seminars offered by many Project Excellence teachers in conjunction with their courses were problematic in our analysis. There was not sufficient information in the student learning guides about seminars, their frequency, attendance requirements, content, and learning activities, to rate them against any specific criteria.

We consulted teachers responsible for 15 of the sample courses concerning their use of seminars. The number of seminars reported varied from none to 20. Seminars typically involve the teacher and a small group of students working on the same unit. However, some teachers interpret assistance to an individual student who asks for help as a seminar. Others have video-taped traditional lessons, which students can use in addition to, or in lieu of, written explanations in the learning guides. Some require students to attend, while others offer them as options. Seminars may prepare students for upcoming units, provide help with units in progress, or provide opportunities to present assignments. In sum, there is great variation in the number of seminars associated with different courses, and in the way those seminars contribute to curriculum and student learning.

Seminars are considered by the E.S.C.H.S. staff to be an important part of Project Excellence. While the administration and staff have put considerable effort into evaluating and revising the written learning guides, there has been little critical attention to that part of the curriculum implemented through seminars. We believe that the administration, in collaboration with department heads and teachers, should ensure that seminar content is adequately reflected in the student learning guides, and that methods of evaluating seminar effectiveness should be considered.

The Ministry's Criteria for Course Evaluation. The ministry guidelines present criteria in one form or another to help department heads and teachers evaluate the school courses which they have prepared. The average rating of 3.96 for all courses analyzed represents a very satisfactory standard. All but four of the courses rate "4" or higher, and two of these are rated "3", which is satisfactory.

Ministry guidelines and OSIS (section 7.2) also recommend methods for evaluating student achievement. In Project Excellence, there are 20 units in each course. Student performance is usually checked by the marker after every unit, either through unit tests or through assignments requiring written, oral, or practical evidence of completion. It appears that students are held accountable more often in Project Excellence than in traditional programs. Current evaluation practices respond well to the use of formative evaluation methods recommended in OSIS (section 7.7).

Our assessment of the tests provided for each unit consistently revealed a broad sampling of the major requirements for that unit. However, since summative examinations covering several units or an entire course have not been required, the students do not receive this type of assessment in all courses. Mid-course and final examinations are used in most OACs and many Grade 11 and 12 advanced academic courses, but are less common in other areas of the curriculum.

Some educators and some educational psychologists contend that experiences such as review, repetition, and recall strengthen the learning process. The omission of the summative examination in many Project Excellence courses reduces this particular type of learning experience in comparison with the traditional approach. It also deprives teachers of a useful measure for course evaluation.

We tend to agree with those critics of Project Excellence who suggest that more comprehensive examinations are needed, and do not see this as violating the underlying principle of mastery learning. The presence of mid-course and final exams might actually serve as a motivator for students to work steadily to completion of courses. Some students say that the mastery approach to learning in Project Excellence does not require them to remember what they learn from one unit to the next (see chapter 12). Some students and parents are concerned that insufficient experience with timed comprehensive exams will put the students at a disadvantage if they go on to college or university.

The Ministry of Education (OSIS, section 7.2) recommends that "procedures for evaluating student progress should be sufficiently varied to meet the requirements of different individuals and groups of students, different courses, the three levels of difficulty, and a variety of learning environments." Our curriculum content analysis confirms that evaluation procedures have been developed within Project Excellence for courses at each level of difficulty, and that a mix of written, oral, and practical assessment methods are used for different courses. In addition, teachers are encouraged to modify the medium of evaluation, such as substituting an oral test for a written test, to accommodate the needs of students with reading difficulties (see chapters 3 and 5).

Ministry policy also states that "for most purposes, the most effective form of evaluation is the application of the teacher's professional judgement to a wide range of information gathered through observation and assessment" (OSIS, section 7.2). Teachers in Project Excellence do not have regular contact with students in a classroom setting. Most seminars are optional, and students do not regularly attend (chapter 7). While students are assessed frequently on the basis of unit tests or assignments, teachers may rarely see individual students unless the student comes for help or the teacher sends a note asking the student to come to discuss his/her work (more true of academic than practical subjects in technical, commercial, and arts courses). Many students do not habitually do their units in the centres for the courses they are working on (chapter 7). Thus, the opportunities for "observation" of students in the evaluation of student achievement are more limited in Project Excellence than in the traditional system. On the other hand, because of the teacher advisor system and opportunities for consultation among teacher advisors, teachers do have access to a broader range of information about circumstances influencing student performance.

We believe that teacher assessment of student performance is enhanced by personal contact with students, and recommend that the administration and staff consider implementing a policy whereby students are called in for consultation with subject teachers at fixed points in a course. Teachers would only apply the policy to a student when the teacher feels that there has been insufficient personal contact with that student over a set period of time or set of units. Such a policy could improve the basis for student evaluation, and would also function as a check on the continuity of student progress in courses (see credit completion, chapter 11).

Technical Factors. Section 4.8 of OSIS lists seven items of required information for "Courses of Study at the School". Although the average rating for "technical factors" is only 3.63 out of 5.0, this deficiency is most easily corrected. The two requirements omitted from about two-thirds of the 24 courses are: (a) the name of the ministry guideline on which the course is based, and (b) the credit value of the course.

Summary of Evaluation of Ministry Expectations/Requirements in Project Excellence Courses. The preceding analyses concerning ministry curriculum expectations/requirements are intended to be factual summaries of the findings from the 24 courses examined. Our ratings of the proportion of expectations/requirements fulfilled as summarized in table 10-3, should be reassuring to school staffs considering implementation of the Project Excellence approach. The average rating of all five factors for the 24 sample courses is 3.82, which is in the upper range of the satisfactory level. If the two technical factors referred to above are corrected, the average rating will be above 4.00. There were a couple of courses which were not judged satisfactory. Circumstances influencing the quality of these courses are discussed at the conclusion of this section.

10.2.4. Findings for Methodology Suggestions in Project Excellence Learning Guides

The methods used in each of the 24 sample E.S.C.H.S. courses have been analyzed separately from the expectations and requirements for course aims, content, etc. Since, for the most part, the ministry guidelines present their ideas for methodology in the form of suggestions only, a different rating scale is called for. There are more than 70 methodology suggestions in the Grade 9 and Grade 10 English courses. The number of suggestions in the 22 other sample courses generally varies from five to 20.

The wording makes it clear that ministry suggestions are intended to be ideas from which teachers may choose. They are expected to show initiative and adaptability, but at the same time exercise a high degree of professional responsibility by inclusion of the most important types of experiences for the students. We designed the following rating scale.

Ratings for Methodology	Interpretations
5	85 to 100% of ministry suggestions for methodology or teaching techniques used. Represents an excellent standard.
4	75 to 84% of suggestions implemented. A good standard.
3	65 to 74% of suggestions implemented. A satisfactory standard.
2	50 to 64% represents an unsatisfactory response.
1	0 to 40% of suggestions implemented.

The ratings for proportions (and per cents) of ministry suggestions about methodology that were used by teachers in the 24 sample courses are recorded in table 10-4. The average rating obtained for methodology is 3.75, which is in the upper range of the satisfactory level. Four of the seven subject areas or groupings have a rating of 4.0 or higher, a good standard. However, the rating for français, representing two of the 24 courses, pulls the overall average down.

Low ratings were also recorded for français courses in terms of satisfying guideline requirements/expectations (table 10-3). This situation may be due to staff turnover in the français department. All the full-time français teachers transferred to the new French-language separate secondary school during the first two years of Project Excellence. There was only one full-time français teacher the year of our study. She was new to the school and left the following year. There was no department head the year of our study. As a result of the staffing situation, many of the français/French courses had not gone through two or three revisions like other courses in the school. A new department head was appointed in the spring of 1988. We recommend a thorough in-house review of existing français/French courses, in particular, those which were originally developed by teachers no longer in the school.

Although the average ratings for methodology range from satisfactory to good in our analysis, we did identify three areas of concern common to a number of individual courses. The guidelines for some courses, such as in English and français, emphasize the desirability of providing students with a balance of reading and writing, speaking and listening experiences. We found that speaking and listening activities were generally underemphasized in proportion to reading and writing in Project Excellence courses. While it may be more difficult to utilize speaking and listening activities with the individualized curriculum in Project Excellence, we believe that renewed attention to this area of methodology should be a focus of future revisions.

Our second concern relates to the diversity of learning modes employed in Project Excellence courses. One of the stated aims of the Project is to provide students with alternative learning modes in order to accommodate different learning styles. As reported in the Project history (chapter 3), the acquisition and incorporation of more audio-visual materials into the curriculum was a school-wide priority for curriculum revision. Our analysis confirms that a wide variety of learning resources and activities have been incorporated into many courses. However, we observed few units in which students were actually presented with options for mastering the same concepts or objectives.

In our opinion, considerable progress has been made towards the goal of providing students with alternative learning modes. Accomplishment of this goal will require sustained commitment, resources, and effort from teachers and the administration.

TABLE 10-4

Ratings for Degree of Use of Ministry Suggestions for Methodology in 24 Sample Courses

Subject Areas and Groupings Analyzed		No. of Courses in Each Group	Ratings Obtained for Degree of Use
1.	English	3	3.67
2.	Français	2	2.50
3.	Mathematics	3	3.67
4.	Science	5	4.00
5.	Social Sciences	4	4.75
6.	The Arts, Physical and Health Edn., and Guidance	3	4.00
7.	Business and Technological Studies	4	4.00
Aggregate for All Courses		24	90.00
Average for All Courses		3.43	3.75

To date, attention has focussed on the acquisition or development of audio-visual resources such video-tapes and computer software keyed to the curriculum. There has been little in-service attention, however, to the pedagogical uses of these materials. Providing teachers with more information about effective ways of using these kinds of resources to support student learning might well stimulate more creative thinking and expanded use of such materials by teachers and students alike. We recommend that the administration seek out in-service assistance in the educational uses of audio-visual resources, such as consultants from the educational services division of TVOntario.

Our third concern relates to the Ministry of Education expectation that "students must learn to work not only as individuals but also with others. This involves the student in listening, co-operating, sharing, interacting, and experiencing mutual evaluation" (OSIS, section 7.1). In the chapter on student role (chapter 7), we made recommendations to encourage greater student participation in optional seminars and to assist students in learning to work effectively in pairs and small groups. Here, we recommend that the administration and teachers consider building in more interpersonal activities and student discussions (not necessarily teacher led) in future unit revisions wherever possible.

10.2.5 Concluding Comments Regarding the Curriculum

Overall, we were favourably impressed with the quality of the courses sampled for our curriculum evaluation. The total rating for each subject area grouping is shown in table 10-3. This includes both the expectations/requirements and the suggestions for methodology. The overall rating for all courses of 3.81 is in the upper range of the satisfactory level. We judge this to be a very acceptable standard for the 24 courses analyzed, in terms of satisfying ministry expectations for careful consideration of curriculum guidelines in planning curriculum (OSIS, section 3.3).

We conclude our curriculum analysis with three general observations and directions for future curriculum improvement. First is the tendency for lower ratings in subject areas where there has been frequent turnover in teaching staff. It appears that some courses affected by teacher turnover have been less thoroughly revised and refined, and that teacher commitment to course revision may be linked to teacher expectations of stability. This raises the question of teacher versus departmental ownership and responsibility for ongoing course improvement. In light of continuing staffing adjustments and future turnover in teaching staff, we believe the evaluation, maintenance, and improvement of courses should become less the responsiblity of individual teachers, and more a collaborative departmental responsibility. This conclusion supports a previous recommendation concerning the "institutionalization" of Project Excellence (chapter 4).

Our second observation is that courses based on ministry guidelines published prior to OSIS tend to have lower ratings than those developed from post-OSIS curriculum guidelines. The newer guidelines tend to be more precise about required and suggested content and methods, which may account, in part, for this finding. Consultation with teachers who developed the courses also indicated that where new guidelines were not available at the time of initial development, teachers were more likely to base their courses on existing course outlines than to go back to the old guideline. Teachers were understandably reluctant to develop entirely new courses, since new guidelines were on the horizon in most subject areas. It seems fair to expect that the overall consistency of curriculum in the school with the requirements of ministry guidelines will continue to improve as future guidelines are released and courses are revised accordingly.

This observation also brings into perspective the broader context in which Project Excellence has come into place. The Project was initiated in the midst of a major revision in secondary school curriculum policies following the adoption in 1984 of the basic policies outlined in OSIS. Even if Project Excellence had not come along, the teachers at E.S.C.H.S. would have been involved in the development of new courses in response to these new guidelines over the last four years.

In our opinion, an important current issue for curriculum in Project Excellence is how to maintain sustained commitment to and effort for ongoing curriculum revision after new guidelines have been responded to, and after initial revisions in unit length and clarity have been made. In the chapter on teacher role (chapter 5), we pointed out the difficulty many teachers are now having finding time for curriculum work. We recommended a restructuring of the teacher workday, both to accommodate unforeseen demands and to ensure curriculum development time when needed.

Project Excellence holds great promise for students. The kinds of curriculum modifications suggested here and in existing Project goals (e.g., alternative learning modes, use of AV materials, more interpersonal activities) will help make that promise more accessible to a broader range of students. For that to happen, however, steps must be taken to ensure that the emphasis on curriculum development and revision is sustained.

This will require continued support and pressure from the administration. The time management concerns require immediate attention. We further recommend that the administration, in collaboration with department heads and staff, continue to establish periodic school-wide goals for curriculum improvement to provide a collaborative focus for revision.

Finally, we wish to acknowledge and support teacher requests for access to curriculum consultants with expertise in such things as concept development through independent learning materials in their subject areas. We did not approach our curriculum analysis as experts in the subject matter sampled, and our critique does not deal with the courses at that level. We believe the Ministry of Education should assist the administration and staff at E.S.C.H.S. in locating and facilitating access to appropriate sources of curriculum expertise. If the ministry wishes to encourage other schools across the province to adopt this system of education, then additional assistance to Project Excellence to improve its status as a model and consultative source for other schools is desirable.

10.2.6. Recommendations for the Curriculum

The following recommendations are in addition to related recommendations cited from previous chapters.

(32) *Recommendation:* We believe that the administration, in collaboration with department heads and teachers, should ensure that seminar content is adequately reflected in the student learning guides, and that methods of evaluating seminar effectiveness should be considered.

(33) *Recommendation:* We tend to agree with those critics of Project Excellence who suggest that more summative examinations are needed, and do not see this as violating the underlying principle of mastery learning. The presence of mid-course and final exams should reinforce student learning and might serve as a motivator for students to work steadily towards completion of their courses.

(34) *Recommendation:* We believe that teacher assessment of student performance is enhanced by personal contact with students, and recommend that the administration and staff consider implementing a policy whereby students are called in for consultation with subject teachers at fixed points in a course.

(35) *Recommendation:* We recommend a thorough in-house review of existing français/French courses, in particular, those which were originally developed by teachers no longer in the school.

(36) *Recommendation:* While it may be more difficult to utilize speaking and listening activities with the individualized curriculum in Project Excellence, we believe that renewed attention to this area of methodology should be a focus of future revisions.

(37) *Recommendaiton:* We recommend that the administration seek out in-service assistance in the educational uses of audio-visual resources, such as that offered by consultants from the educational services division of TVOntario.

(38) *Recommendation:* We recommend that the administration and teachers consider building in more interpersonal activities and student discussions (not necessarily teacher led) in future unit revisions wherever possible.

(39) *Recommendation:* We recommend that the administration in co-operation with department heads and staff continue to establish periodic school-wide goals for curriculum improvement to provide a collaborative focus for revision.

(40) *Recommendation:* We recommend that the Ministry of Education assist the administration and staff at E.S.C.H.S. in locating and facilitating access to appropriate sources of curriculum expertise.

CHAPTER 11

STUDENT OUTCOMES: CREDITS, MARKS, DROPOUTS, AND TRANSFERS

Chapter 11 presents findings on student outcomes under Project Excellence. Data are presented on the following kinds of outcomes: credit completion rates, average marks, dropout rates, and voluntary transfers to other schools. Recommendations are offered at the conclusion of each section of the chapter.

11.1 CREDIT COMPLETION RATES

11.1.1. Credit Completion Rate Findings

Under the traditional system of education, students had to worry about their grades, but they did not have to worry about getting through their courses each year. That was the teacher's responsibility. As long as students got passing marks, they were deemed to have completed their courses (whether the teacher taught the entire course or not), and could expect to accumulate enough credits to graduate in four years.

Under Project Excellence, there is no guarantee that a student will finish high school in four or five years just because he or she gets good marks. The rate of credit accumulation depends on how many 20-unit courses students are able to complete each year.

As part of our evaluation, we examined the rate at which students accumulate credits in Project Excellence. Comparisons are made of estimated credit completion rates at E.S.C.H.S. for the three years prior to Project Excellence, to desired completion rates based on provincial requirements for high school graduation. Table 11-1 presents course completion statistics estimated from our data base of 1982/83 to 1984/85 student outcomes. These data are only a rough estimate of *credit* completion, because they are derived from records of student marks by *course*. A credit value of one can be assumed for most of the courses at E.S.C.H.S.[12]

---

[12] A few technical courses may have been half-credits during these years. The small number of students and courses involved is unlikely to alter the overall patterns for students in the school. Were the data adjusted on this basis, it would tend to lower rather than raise the estimated completion rate.

Table 11-1

Annual Course Completion Rates for the Three School Years Prior to Project Excellence 1982/83 to 1984/85

	ALL STUDENTS	ADVANCED STUDENTS	GENERAL STUDENTS	BASIC STUDENTS	OTHERS
NUMBER OF STUDENTS	1562	582	713	161	113
COMPLETED COURSES	9059	3858	3876	885	472
AVERAGE COURSES COMPLETED	5.8	6.6	5.4	5.5	4.2

The averages presented in table 11-1 were computed from the combined 1982/83-1984/85 student outcome data. For purposes of analysis, we defined a student's level on the basis of what English course they were enrolled in. Students not enrolled in any English course are listed as "Other".[13] For purposes of arriving at a general picture of credit completion rates prior to Project Excellence, these averages provide a reasonable estimate.

The Ministry of Education increased the minimum credit requirements for secondary school graduation from 27 to 30 credits in September 1984. The relevant figure for comparison to the 1982/83-1984/85 student outcomes data is 27 credits. Although the ministry did not require students to complete a specific number of credits per year, students were normally expected to complete the 27 credits in four years at a rate of about seven credits a year (OSIS, appendix D). Grade 13 courses at this time were over and above the basic graduation requirements for the Secondary School Graduation Diploma.

According to the course completion averages presented in table 11-1, students in advanced English courses at E.S.C.H.S. before Project Excellence were about on track with ministry expectations. The average annual course completion rates computed for students in general and basic English, however, were below the minimum rate needed to graduate in four years.

The comparison to credit completion rates under Project Excellence is complicated by a number of factors. First, a minimum of 30 credits is now required for graduation. Ministry guidelines still suggest that students can finish 30 credits in four years, at a rate of seven to eight credits a year (OSIS, appendix D).

---

[13] The figure indicated for "all students" is seven less than the sum of advanced, general, basic, and other students. These seven students were probably enrolled in two English courses at different levels and were double-counted. The numbers are too small to affect the overall findings.

Second, students in Project Excellence can carry over partially completed courses from year to year. As a result, marks recorded each year tend to overestimate the annual credit completion rate. The only way to accurately estimate rate of progress is to take the total credits earned since a student entered Project Excellence, and divide by the number of years enrolled in the project.[14]

The following analysis is based on a computer printout of course and credit completion records for all students at E.S.C.H.S. as of June 30, 1988. The records listed each student's date of entry, course codes and credits earned, the date earned, and marks.

From these records, we were able to count the total number of credits (not just courses) accumulated from the time a student entered Project Excellence, and to compute credit completion averages on that basis. For this analysis, we selected those students who had only attended high school under Project Excellence, i.e., students entering Grade 9 at E.S.C.H.S. in the fall of 1985, 1986, and 1987. Their results are more valid indicators of Project impact on student progress than the results of students who began their secondary schooling under a different system. The findings are displayed in tables 11-2 and 11-3.

Table 11-2 shows the average number of credits accumulated as of June 30, 1988, for students entering Project Excellence at Grade 9 in the fall of 1985, 1986, and 1987. An annual credit completion rate is computed from the total for each group. The average total credit completions is compared to Ministry of Education guidelines for how many credits students in Grades 9, 10, and 11 should finish under the present credit system in order to graduate in four years.

---

[14] Course overlap from year to year is not uncommon in Project Excellence. From our 1986/87 data base, we were able to figure out how many courses students carried over from the previous year and completed, how many courses they began and finished during the 1986/87 school year, and how many courses they had in progress at the end of the school year. Fifty-four per cent of the students (N=344) carried over and completed courses from the previous year. For this group, the average number of courses carried over and completed was 2.6 per student (an average of 26.4 units per student). Eighty-three per cent of the students had courses in progress at the end of the school year. The average number of incomplete courses was 3.0 for students in this group (an average of 20.4 units per student). One cannot interpret credit completion progress in Project Excellence without keeping the overlap in coursework from school year to school year in perspective.

These data indicate that, on the average, students in Project Excellence are not accumulating credits at a sufficient rate to satisfy the requirements for an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) in four years. In terms of average credits per year, students are progressing a little slower than students did before Project Excellence. Because the ministry's credit requirements have increased, these credit completion rates must be regarded as a serious concern.

Students who entered Project Excellence in September 1985 at Grade 9 are, on the average, one year behind the ministry's guidelines for credit accumulation after three years of secondary school. This gap is probably caused in part by the difficulties experienced by teachers and students in getting the Project running the first year. Students entering in the fall of 1986 and 1987, however, are still off the ministry's recommended pace by three or four credits.

Table 11-2

Credit Completion Rates for Students Entering Grade 9 in 1985/86, 1986/87, and 1987/88

GRADE 9 ENTRY	NUMBER OF STUDENTS	CREDIT TOTAL JUNE 1988	MEAN CREDITS PER STUDENT: TOTAL	MINISTRY GUIDELINE	MEAN CREDITS PER STUDENT: YEARLY
1985/86	58	857	14.8 credits	23 credits	4.9 credits
1986/87	65	735	11.3 credits	16 credits	5.6 credits
1987/88	78	393	5.0 credits	8 credits	5.0 credits

Table 11-3

Work in Progress Rates for Students Entering Grade 9 in 1985/86, 1986/87, and 1987/88 (Based on additional units completed)

GRADE 9 ENTRY	NUMBER OF STUDENTS	EXTRA UNIT TOTAL JUNE 1988	MEAN EXTRA UNITS PER STUDENT	COURSE EQUIVALENTS
1985/86	58	1323	22.8	1.3
1986/87	65	1682	25.9	1.6
1987/88	78	2001	25.6	1.6

Table 11-4 breaks down average credit completion rates for each of these groups of students by level of course. Advanced, general, or basic refers to the level of English course the students were enrolled in. For those students not enrolled in English, the level of français (francophone students only), mathematics, science, or social sciences courses is used for classification.

Table 11-4

Credit Completion Rates for Students in Advanced, General, and Basic Courses Who Entered Grade 9 in 1985/86, 1986/87, and 1987/88

SCHOOL YEAR	VARIABLES	ADVANCED	GENERAL	BASIC
1985/86	Students	28	24	6
	Credit Total June 1988	481	289	87
	Mean Credits per Student: Total	17.2	12	14.5
	Ministry Guideline	23	23	23
	Mean Credits per Student: Yearly	5.7	4	4.8
1986/87	Students	34	25	6
	Credit Total June 1988	421	269	44
	Mean Credits per Student: Total	12.4	10.8	7.3
	Ministry Guideline	16	16	16
	Mean Credits per Student: Yearly	6.2	5.4	3.6
1987/88	Students	38	28	11
	Credit Total June 1988	233	104	42
	Mean Credits per Student: Total	6.1	3.7	3.8
	Ministry Guideline	8	8	8
	Mean Credits per Student: Yearly	6.1	3.7	3.8

From these data, it is evident that students in advanced level courses are the only group accumulating credits at a sufficient rate to graduate in *five* years. Students at all levels for each year are substantially out of step with ministry guidelines for credit completion during the first three years of high school in order to graduate in *four* years.

Because students in Project Excellence typically carry over work in some courses from one year to another, the cumulative credit count at the end of the school year does not reflect the sum of all work successfully completed in that time. A student might have work in progress on one or more courses. This work can be measured in terms of additional units completed. In our 1988 data base, the number of additional units completed ranges from 0 to 81. By dividing this figure by 20, the standard number of units for a course, one can get a rough estimate in "course equivalents" of additional courses completed. A student with 25 extra units, for example, could be viewed as having completed the equivalent of an additional 1.25 courses, though in fact the 25 units might be spread out over several courses.

It would be inappropriate to adjust the cumulative credit completion rates on the basis of additional units completed. It would be equally inappropriate, however, to ignore this additional work in evaluating student progress towards graduation. Table 10-3 shows the average additional units completed per student for the 1985/86, 1986/87, and 1987/88 Grade 9's as of June 30, 1988. According to these data, students in each group successfully completed the equivalent in units of about one-and-a-half courses. Considered together with the average total credits for each group reported in table 11-2, student progress is not as slow as it seems, particularly for the 1986/87 and 1987/88 groups.

If it were possible to turn this additional, successfully completed course work into real credits, students at E.S.C.H.S. would be accumulating credits at a higher rate than before Project Excellence. The average credit completion figures for students entering at Grade 9 in September 1986 and 1987 would only be one to three credits off ministry expectations (the gap for the 1985 Grade 9's would still be about six credits). Some means of controlling and focussing this additional work is needed (see Recommendations).

It could be argued that five years rather than four years is a more appropriate timeline for assessing student progress, in which case a completion rate of six credits a year would suffice. In Ontario, however, the fifth year of secondary school, formerly called Grade 13, has always been regarded as an additional year for university-bound students. Under the old 27 credit system, a student's fifth year was supposed to be dedicated to Grade 13 courses beyond the Secondary School Graduation Diploma. Under the current 30-credit system, Grade 13 courses have been replaced by Ontario Academic Courses (OACs). Students have the option of including OACs within their 30 credits or taking them in addition to the required credits. The Ministry regards 30 credits as the minimum for graduation. OSIS states that all students who are capable of doing so should be encouraged to do more than 30 credits. Although there is no specified amount of time students may take to gain the 30 credits needed for graduation, under OSIS they may gain them in four years.[15]

With these considerations in mind, it is our judgement that students in Project Excellence are not currently accumulating credits at a satisfactory rate. While a majority of students in advanced courses are keeping pace with a five-year graduation timeline at about six credits a year, this only meets the minimum requirements of OSIS. Moreover, they will be forced at this rate to incorporate the six OAC requirements within the basic 30 credits. This may limit their use of the 14 elective credits for non-compulsory courses in subjects such as art, music, commercial studies, family studies, and technical studies. The majority of students entering Project Excellence at Grade 9 over the last three years are substantially off the pace even for graduation in five years.

11.1.2. Recommendations Related to Credit Completion Rates

(41) *Recommendation:* **Maximum timelines should be set for completion of courses in Project Excellence. Such timelines would help students to keep working towards completion and avoid the temptation to set some course work aside indefinitely. Students who do not finish a course within the prescribed time should not be failed, but could be penalized a certain number of points for their mark in that course. Timelines might vary for different courses. The student's teacher advisor, the guidance department, and the parents would be better able**

---

[15] In August 1988 the Ontario Secondary School Principal's Council reported the results of a survey of all public secondary schools. The report included data from 323 schools on the number of students qualifying for an OSSD in June 1988 who began secondary school in September 1984, when the new 30-credit requirements came into effect. A total of 25,141 students across the province qualified for their OSSD, which means they completed 30 credits in four years. Of these, however, only 2622 planned to enter university in September 1988. Presumably, these were the only university-bound students who managed to complete all six OAC credits within the minimum 30-credit requirement. Another 31,317 students planned to return for a fifth or more year of secondary school in September 1988. Of these, 12,717 qualified for an OSSD in June, and 18,600 did not. The former group presumably consists mainly of students who completed 30 credits without incorporating all their OAC requirements. The latter would be students who did not complete the minimum number of credits to graduate in four years. These data suggest that attainment of 30 credits in four years has been possible for a substantial number of students, but that incorporating the six OAC requirements in those 30 credits is very difficult.

to construct a program leading to a satisfactory number of credit completions per year with such time guidelines in effect.

(42) *Recommendation:* Students set timetables for course completion for the term, semester, or year with their TA. Under the present system, when a student finishes a course, he can begin working on another even though he still has other courses in progress. This diverts student energy from course completion to course initiation. The time spent on a new course could be more productively spent on completing remaining courses in progress. We recommend that a "promotion policy" should be instituted whereby students are not permitted to enrol in new courses each semester or year until they complete the other courses that they are enrolled in. Such a policy would progressively focus student efforts towards course completion. It would reduce the number of courses carried over from year to year and should increase the number of courses successfully completed in a given year.

(43) *Recommendation:* We recommend that the school administration, system officials, and board consider instituting a summer school program to enable students who have difficulty maintaining a satisfactory credit completion rate to finish course work carried over from the spring, or to begin new courses.

11.2. MARKS

11.2.1. Marks Findings

An obvious question is, "What kind of impact has Project Excellence had on students' academic performance at E.S.C.H.S.?" Our contract directed us to look for evidence of any "substantial differences" in student performance since the Project began.

Since the Project was in its third year of operation when our study was commissioned, we could not set up an experimental evaluation design with formal pre- and post-test measures of student performance. Moreover, no independent pre- and post-Project measures of student performance were gathered by the school or board for tracking Project impact. As a result, we were limited to before/after comparisons of student marks on file in the school.

To evaluate the impact of Project Excellence on student marks, we compared baseline data on student marks from the three years prior to the Project (1982/83, 1983/84, 1984/85) to marks reported for year two of the Project (1986/87). We chose year two because we felt that the first year of Project Excellence was too disruptive for students and teachers to provide a fair measure of student performance under this system of education. Teacher and student behaviours, and the curriculum, were more stabilized by year two. Even so, this is probably too early to evaluate summatively the full impact of the Project, but not too early for the kind of interim evaluation reported here.

We compiled student marks for the three years prior to the Project from student ledgers completed by school staff at the end of each school year. These records listed each student enroled each year, the courses taken, the marks obtained, absences by course, and retirements. For year two of Project Excellence, we developed a form with the vice-principals for each teacher advisor to list what year each of their students entered the school, what courses they were enroled in, how many units they completed in each course, what marks were obtained for courses completed during the year, absences, and retirements. All these data were coded, keypunched, and computer analyzed.[16]

We conducted before and after comparisons of student marks for all courses by subject, grade level, and level of difficulty. Appendix K presents the average marks for students enroled in all courses in each department for the three school years 1982/83 to 1984/85 and for 1987. The extent and consistency of the increase in average marks by subject area under Project Excellence is striking. Averages ranged from 58 to 65 across subject areas for the three years prior to the Project. Averages ranged from 77 to 85 in year two of the Project. Average marks increased 19 to 20 percentage points in ten of the twelve subject areas. For science and commercial subjects, the increase was about 16 percentage points.

Even more striking is the fact that this pattern holds when we control for grade level and for level of difficulty. Average marks are compared by subject and level in Appendix L, and by subject and grade in Appendix M. Regardless of subject, level of difficulty, or grade, the average marks increase about 15 to 20 percentage points under Project Excellence.[17]

---

[16] The accuracy of our analysis is dependent on the accuracy of school records of student outcomes. Data for some students were missing or unusable in whole or in part. Since we were dealing with school-wide statistics rather than tracking individual students, these shortcomings probably do not affect the overall trends. We have tried to be conservative and fair in using and interpreting these data.

[17] Pre/post comparisons of average marks by subject and level are complicated in the "practical" subject areas, like art, commercial, technical and family studies, by curriculum changes under OSIS. Before OSIS, these subject areas had multilevel courses. After OSIS, the same course descriptions are usually listed as general level courses. New courses appear at the advanced and basic levels. It would be inappropriate to compare marks of students in mixed ability level courses before the Project to students in general courses within the Project simply because the course description is the same. Thus, for this part of the analysis we only compared the major academic subjects, which were less affected by this discrepancy.

An increase in average marks is an expected outcome. In the first place, a student cannot get a failing final mark in Project Excellence. Under the mastery grading system, units are repeated until a passing grade is obtained. Thus, there are no failing marks in the 1986/87 data set, which would lower the school averages. In the second place, the school baseline for a passing grade under Project Excellence is 60 rather than 50 as before. Students scoring lower than 60 on unit work and tests are strongly encouraged, if not required, to try again. These are the obvious and legitimate reasons for the gains recorded in average marks. Some of the gain may be attributable, as well, to the increased individual attention given to students in difficulty, to increased student motivation, and to the fact that slower students can proceed at their own rate. The potential contributions of these factors to the raised achievement levels cannot be determined from this analysis.

Another way of looking at the impact of Project Excellence on student marks, is by examining the variance in scores. For the same reasons listed above, i.e., the changes in grading practices, individualized attention and pace of learning, one can expect less variation in student marks in Project Excellence than before. It is in the nature of the system to produce uniform levels of student achievement. This outcome is confirmed in the data. Data reported in Appendix K reveal that the standard deviation has decreased by 8 to 14 standard deviation units for virtually all subject areas under Project Excellence.[18] This means that student marks are clustered more closely to the average mark than they were under the old system. The patterns hold when grade and level are controlled (Appendixes L and M).

These data lead to two conclusions. First, student achievement is consistent with what one would expect in a mastery learning system. That is, Project Excellence is working in practice as predicted in theory. Second, student achievement, as measured by average marks in different subject areas, is substantially higher than before Project Excellence. That is, students under Project Excellence are doing better academically than their peers in the old system.

These conclusions, in particular the second, cannot be accepted entirely at face value. They are based on before/after comparisons of existing student records. It is difficult to judge fairly the relative value of past and present marks without an independent standard of comparison, and consequently difficult to address directly possible allegations of grade inflation.

---

[18] The standard deviation measures the amount of variation in scores. The larger the standard deviation, the greater the variation in marks across students.

Unfortunately, our case study design did not provide for that type of analysis, though we did search for external sources of comparison that might help interpret the value of current marks in the school. The Ontario Assessment Instrument Pool (OAIP) items were one possibility. The department heads, however, reported little use of OAIP items in the old or present system. Comparison of Grade 13 marks to first year achievement data of students entering universities and colleges was another possibility. The guidance department had few such records on hand, however. Moreover, at the time of our study, students going on to university or college would only have spent their last one or two years in Project Excellence. Their post-secondary performance would only be a partial product of their participation in the Project.

It is possible to compare average Grade 13 marks in different subjects to provincial averages reported in the Ministry of Education's annual statistical reports. Grade 13 marks at E.S.C.H.S. for 1986/87 do not represent the longitudinal impact of Project Excellence, since those students only spent their last two years of high school in the system. The comparison, however, does help clarify the significance of the gains in average marks under the Project.

Average Grade 13 marks for the three years prior to Project Excellence and for year two of the Project are compared to provincial averages for the same years in Appendix N. The pattern is consistent. Under the traditional system of education, Grade 13 students at E.S.C.H.S. were averaging in the high 60s, about two to four percentage points below provincial averages in most subjects. Grade 13 averages in English were about 10 points below the provincial average. Geography was the only subject area on par. Under Project Excellence, Grade 13 students at E.S.C.H.S. are averaging in the high 70s and low 80s, ranging from 6 to 12 percentage points above provincial averages. The most dramatic gain is in English, from about 10 points below to 7.5 points above provincial Grade 13 averages.

It is important to keep in perspective that the 1986/87 Grade 13 averages are based on very small samples of students, and that the students involved only spent their last two years of high school in the Project. Because most of these students completed their previous schooling at E.S.C.H.S., however, the significant increases in Grade 13 averages are even more striking. One might expect that the impact of Project Excellence would not show up as strongly for students who did most of their Grade 9 to 12 work under the old system.

These findings show a positive outcome of the Project. On the basis of these comparisons, however, we cannot tell how much of this outcome is truly attributable to improved student learning, and how much is attributable to the changes in grading practices. This question of the real value of current marks of Grade 13 and other students in Project Excellence will remain unanswered unless a system of tracking and assessing student performance against some external indicators like OAIP items or first-year university achievement is put into place; or until a comparative evaluation with other schools using some sort of standardized testing is carried out.

11.2.2. Recommendations Based on Evaluation of Average Marks

(44) *Recommendation:* The school administration and subject departments should ask the Ministry of Education Regional Office to provide in-service and technical assistance to help incorporate OAIP items in Project Excellence testing materials where appropriate, and to help interpret and use findings from these items once obtained. This will help the school to assess the value of marks obtained under Project Excellence relative to student performance on these test items in other schools and boards.

(45) *Recommendation:* The school administration should instruct the guidance department to mount an annual campaign to make graduating students aware of the school's need for feedback on their first year of university or college performance, for purposes of evaluating the effectiveness of the school's programs in terms of university preparation. The school administration should ask the Ministry of Education Regional Office for assistance in learning how to use post-secondary records of student performance to assess the school's programs.

(46) *Recommendation:* The Ministry of Education should require or strongly encourage school boards adopting this system of education in any secondary school to arrange for longitudinal evaluation of student outcomes during the pre-implementation phase of project development, rather than attempting an ex post facto evaluation as presented here. The ministry should make technical assistance available to these school boards to assist in designing, carrying out, and interpreting the results of such evaluations.

11.3 DROPOUT RATES

Student dropout rates provide a simple measure of judging school effectiveness, where success is defined in terms of high school completion. Dropout rate comparisons can be made for different schools, for individual schools to provincial norms, and for before/after comparisons following major curriculum reforms. We gathered statistics on dropouts from

E.S.C.H.S. for the three school years prior to Project Excellence and for the first two years of the Project. These data were used to calculate and compare dropout rates before and after the Project began. Comparisons are also made with average dropout rates for the province (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1986).

For purposes of these comparisons, we use the Ministry of Education's procedure for calculating the rates of "retirements from secondary schools without diplomas or certificates". The rates represent the number of retirements as a percentage of enrolment in the previous year. When calculated against the total enrolment of the school, the resulting figure represents an "annual dropout rate" for a school (Lawton *et al.,* 1988).

Since we relied on existing records of dropouts from E.S.C.H.S., we also relied on the school administration's definition of a dropout, as follows:

> "A dropout is a student who:
>
> a) Quit school before graduation to either enter the workplace or remain at home.
>
> A dropout *is not* a student who:
>
> a) Went to college or university.
> b) Graduated from E.S.C.H.S.
> c) Transferred to another school.
> d) Quit school or went to another school and then returned to E.S.C.H.S.
> e) Moved to another town, city or province because the family moved.
> f) Is an adult."

This definition is sufficiently similar to the Ministry of Education's definition of "retirements from secondary schools" to make reasonable comparisons to provincial dropout statistics.

Dropout rate findings and comparisons are presented in table 11-5. The data presented suggest that under the system of education provided in Project Excellence, there has been a substantial decline in the annual rate of official retirements. Moreover, the annual dropout rates when compared to dropout statistics for schools across the province have also improved.

Table 11-5

DROPOUT RATE COMPARISONS PRE/POST PROJECT EXCELLENCE

YEAR	ENROLMENT	RETIREMENTS RATE	ANNUAL RATE[19]	PROVINCIAL
Pre-Project				
1982/83	617	76	12.3%	12.6%
1983/84	570	72	12.6%	13.8%
1984/85	542	74	13.6%	13.1%
Post-Project				
1985/86	500	37	7.4%	13.5%
1986/87	455	41	9.0%	not available

Interpretation of these figures is complicated by the fact that students attending E.S.C.H.S. under Project Excellence have alternatives available to them that did not exist before. Prior to 1985, E.S.C.H.S. was the only school in town. If a student was failing or did not like the school, the only alternatives were to drop out or to move to another jurisdiction. The board did not routinely permit students in Cochrane to choose between E.S.C.H.S. and the board's other secondary school in Iroquois Falls, about 35 miles away.

In 1985, the first year of Project Excellence, the local separate school board opened a French-language secondary school in Cochrane. Substantial numbers of E.S.C.H.S. students transferred to the new school that year and succeeding years. There is no way of knowing whether the transfer students included an unusually high proportion of students who would likely have dropped out of E.S.C.H.S. over the next couple of years, had they not had the option of transferring. The francophone population at E.S.C.H.S. during the year of our study had a higher proportion of students in advanced level courses than the English-language section. Many francophone students in the general and basic level courses may have opted out of the Project for the other school. In his analysis of the characteristics and causes of dropouts in Ontario schools, Radwanski (1987) reports that 12 per cent of students in the advanced stream leave school before graduation, as compared to 62 per cent for the general and 79 per cent for the basic streams.

---

[19] Education Statistics, Ontario, 1986. Ontario Ministry of Education.

It is a fact that not all students have successfully adjusted to Project Excellence. Responding to mounting pressure from parents of some of these students, the Cochrane Iroquois Falls board decided to allow students to opt out of Project Excellence and continue their high school studies in Iroquois Falls (see section 10.4, this chapter). During the 1987/88 school year, there were 21 students in this group. The implication of this alternative is that students who might have dropped out of Project Excellence can transfer instead. According to the principal at I.F.S.S., some of these students have, in fact, dropped out after transferring to his school. Officially, they are recorded as retirements from I.F.S.S., rather than from E.S.C.H.S.

In conclusion, the annual dropout rate at E.S.C.H.S. showed a sharp decrease after the introduction of Project Excellence. This finding suggests that, on the whole, students are staying in school longer than under the previous system of education. It seems fair to assume that this student outcome is partly a result of the Project, with its "no failure" grading and promotion practices, the allowance for students to progress at their own pace, and individualized attention. The simultaneous transfer of a substantial number of students out of the school due to the opening of a new French-language high school and provisions for transfer to the board's other secondary school, however, may have contributed to this reduction.

11.4. TRANSFER STUDENTS

11.4.1. Frequency of Transfer

Dropping out is not the only option for students who choose not to enter or remain in Project Excellence. Some have transferred to other secondary schools. The main alternatives are Iroquois Falls Secondary School[20] and Jeunesse Nord (the French-language

---

[20] I.F.S.S. is larger than E.S.C.H.S. During the 1987/88 school year there were about 600 students, with 48 teachers, two vice-principals, and the principal. The school is a comprehensive bilingual secondary school and shares facilities with a new French Catholic secondary school like E.S.C.H.S. The school is organized on a full-credit semestered system. In terms of programs, the major difference from E.S.C.H.S. is the size and popularity of technical studies (10 shops) at I.F.S.S.

Catholic high school in Cochrane).[21],[22] Part of our study concerned students who leave the Project and their adjustment to other schools. We interviewed ten students at Iroquois Falls Secondary School and nine students at Jeunesse Nord. Students were selected for variation in year of transfer and academic level of courses by the principals (see Appendix O). All were transfers from Project Excellence. We did not interview students who transferred directly from Grade 8 to these other schools, since they had no personal experience in the Project. We also interviewed the principals of these two schools concerning the transition process, the impact on the receiving school, and recommendations.

As described in chapter 4, the board made no provision for students to transfer to Iroquois Falls the first year of Project Excellence. Students who chose to leave the Project that year either switched to the separate school system or physically moved to another town (usually to live with relatives). At the request of certain students and parents, the board agreed to bus students from Cochrane to Iroquois Falls as of September 1986. The approval of both principals and the central administration is required.

Table 11-6 reports the number of E.S.C.H.S. transfer students at I.F.S.S. during the first three years of Project Excellence.[23]

---

[21] Jeunesse Nord opened in September 1985 concurrent with the initiation of Project Excellence. The school began with Grade 9, and added Grades 10, 11 and 12 the following two years. Located in the same building as E.S.C.H.S., the two schools share some facilities, such as the cafeteria, gymnasium, library, and some technical shops. The program is entirely in French, except for anglais courses. The school is organized on a full-credit semestered system.

[22] A few students transferred to schools in other cities, such as Timmins and Ottawa.

[23] The figures are calculated from student lists obtained at I.F.S.S. They may not be entirely accurate, since the number of transfer students enrolled can vary over the course of the year.

Table 11-6

Transfer Students at I.F.S.S.

	1985/86	1986/87	1987/88
Transfers from ESCHS	0	13	12
Never attended ESCHS	0	3	6
Other/Uncertain	0	3	3
TOTAL	0	19	21

Of the students reported as transfers during 1986/87, three were incoming Grade 9's who never attended Project Excellence. Two were francophone students who later switched to Jeunesse Nord. A couple returned to Project Excellence after a term at I.F.S.S., and six dropped out a semester or so after enrolling at I.F.S.S. According to the principal, "Project Excellence was not the problem for some of these kids...School was the problem". The number of Grade 8's opting out of Project Excellence and directly into Grade 9 at I.F.S.S. doubled (3 to 6) in the fall of 1987.

The transfer situation at Jeunesse Nord is different, partly because of its attraction for francophone Catholic students, and partly because the transfer possibilities during the first two years were limited by number of grade levels in place. In May 1988, there were 48 students at Jeunesse Nord who had transferred out of Project Excellence. Physical proximity accounts in part for the fact that twice as many students have switched to Jeunesse Nord as to I.F.S.S.

Transfer dates were not obtained for all the Jeunesse Nord students. Most, however, left Project Excellence during the first two years of the Project (five transferred to schools in other towns before coming to Jeunesse Nord). According to the records obtained, ten transferred at the start or during the 1987/88 school year.[24] The frequency of transfers to Jeunesse Nord will continue to decline, since the number of francophone students entering E.S.C.H.S. at Grade 9 from the separate school board French elementary school is virtually nil.

Background data on the transfer students interviewed at I.F.S.S. and Jeunesse Nord are summarized in Appendix O. Based on our sample, transfer students at I.F.S.S. are more likely than those at Jeunesse Nord to report that they are a year behind in school. They are also more likely to take general courses than advanced. No students in basic level programs were interviewed.

---

[24] Not included in these figures are students moving directly from Grade 8 to Jeunesse Nord. As described in Chapter 3, virtually all students in the French Catholic elementary school now continue in the separate school system.

11.4.2. Reasons for Transfer

The primary reason for these students' decision to leave Project Excellence was *lack of progress* in terms of credit accumulation. Most had already fallen a year or two behind when they made the switch. Students in both schools offered similar reasons for their lack of progress. The most common contributing factors are summarized in table 11-7. These factors were named by a majority of the students consulted. Concerns similar to these are voiced by many students currently enrolled in Project Excellence (see chapters 12 and 14).

Table 11-7

Student Reasons for Transfer to Other Schools

REASONS GIVEN	SAMPLE COMMENTS
Major reason	
Lack of progress	"I only got two credits in one-and-a-half years."
	"The first year I only got one credit...second year about two."
	"..pas assez de crédits dans deux ans...cinq."
	"Je n'ai fait que deux crédits dans ma premiere année."
Contributing factors	
Teachers unavailable	"When I needed help I had to stand in line waiting...a waste of time...Math especially."
	"Every time I had trouble with a subject, especially Math...I had to spend ten minutes waiting...I got discouraged."

	"Les profs ne sont pas disponibles...On se décourage." "Quand j'allais voir un prof, il y avait toujours beaucoup de monde."
Need for teacher direction	"No one pushing you to work." "I need a teacher explaining ...more one-on-one contact in a classroom." "..besoin de quelqu'un pour se faire poussé dans le dos." "..besoin d'un professeur en avant pour enseigner."
Too much freedom	There's too much freedom to do what you want where you want...You don't learn anything." "Too much freedom to get work done...hard to work if friends are around." "...besoin de discipline."

Several other factors contributing to the decision to leave Project Excellence were described by a minority of the transfer students interviewed. Those mentioned by two or more students include immaturity and lack of motivation, frustration with courses that were not fully developed the first year, inability to cope with the pressure to produce, and lack of consultation with students concerning the change. A couple of these students said they thought they could probably cope with the system better now that they were older.

There is no major difference in the reasons for leaving Project Excellence among students who transferred to I.F.S.S. and to Jeunesse Nord. To our surprise, students who switched to Jeunesse Nord did not say they were motivated by the desire to learn and study in a totally French environment. In fact, this finding is consistent with our student survey data. Francophone students at E.S.C.H.S. expressed general satisfaction with the opportunities to learn and study in French in Project Excellence. A final point concerns the major source of student decisions to leave the Project. Virtually all the students interviewed initiated the move on their own. Some had full parental support. Others had to overcome substantial parent opposition to the change. None were counselled to transfer, though some had been put on detention or suspended for failing to comply with Project expectations for student effort. These students were all concerned about their education, determined to graduate, and felt their progress and ability to complete high school were in serious jeopardy if they continued in the Project.

11.4.3 Academic and Social Adjustment

None of the transfer students reported any long-term problems adjusting academically or socially to their new school. While a number of them found they were getting lower grades initially, this was offset by the knowledge that they were "getting work done" and making progress towards graduation. A majority of those interviewed said they had no major problems.

Some students experienced temporary difficulties adjusting to a conventional academic regime. The main problems described included getting used to the workload and deadlines for homework and assignments, learning to study for exams, adjusting to classroom learning routines, and having to remain in a classroom for an hour to an hour and a half.

On the positive side, the students found having a structured workload with set deadlines more manageable than working on their own. They liked the full credit semestered schedule which virtually guaranteed them four credits a term. They also liked being "taught" by teachers in the front of the classroom again. These students recognized that they had given up a measure of freedom by leaving Project Excellence. What they gained in return was progress towards graduation ("I don't miss it 'cause I know I wouldn't have any work done if I had that freedom"; "It felt better 'cause the work was getting done... getting credits...getting marks...Self-esteem goes up").

The academic adjustment experiences of students switching to I.F.S.S. and Jeunesse Nord were similar in all but one important respect. The difference centres on how the receiving schools dealt with courses that students had only partially completed in Project Excellence. For transfer students at I.F.S.S., this ends up as "lost work". They have to repeat the incomplete courses. According to the students and the principal, requests to

E.S.C.H.S. to permit students to "borrow" units for nearly completed courses have been turned down, though in a couple of cases students have been allowed to return to Cochrane one day a week to complete a course or two. At Jeunesse Nord, on the other hand, several students reported that the principal had organized special independent study programs for them to finish up nearly completed courses. The net result is that transfer students at Jeunesse Nord were less likely to say they were still a year behind in school. Other than this, no special academic help has been provided to transfer students at either school.

The transfer students at both schools reported no significant social adjustment problems. Students going to Jeunesse Nord already all knew each other. Several said there was a "big family" atmosphere at Jeunesse Nord which was lacking at E.S.C.H.S. Those going to I.F.S.S. are going to a different community. Making new friends has not been a problem for most. Only a few said they associate mainly with peers from Cochrane. Because they are behind in their school work when they switch, transfer students tend to get placed in classes with younger students. Some found this embarrassing at first.

11.4.4. Transportation Issues

No special transportation is necessary for students transferring to Jeunesse Nord. Those going to I.F.S.S. ride a school bus for a half-hour from Cochrane. Students described the bus ride as "boring", "long", and "hard", but tolerable and worth the discomfort. Cochrane students are not the only students bussing to I.F.S.S., so they are not unique in that regard.

Student participation in extra-curricular activities after school at I.F.S.S. was limited by the initial transportation arrangements. In the fall of 1987, the students petitioned the board to provide additional transportation. The board agreed to provide a "late taxi" three afternoons a week for Cochrane students participating in sports or other activities (e.g., plays, band), or who had meetings with teachers and counselors. This solved the problem (though it was too late to get involved in many after- school activities that school year).

11.4.5. School Preference

We asked transfer students what they presently thought of their decision to leave Project Excellence, and which school they would choose if they were making the choice over again. All 19 students from both schools felt they had made the right decision in leaving Project Excellence. Most said they were content to stay in their current school. Two of the students at I.F.S.S. planned to return to Project Excellence for their last year of high school, when they would have fewer courses to do.

11.4.6. Discussion of Transfer Student Findings

The issue of students opting out of a system like Project Excellence to go to another school has to be evaluated at the school system rather than the school level. At heart is the question of choice. Should students have a choice of going to Project Excellence or going to a more conventionally organized school? Based on our findings, we believe they should. The choice, however, could be organized differently and more fairly than is presently the case in Cochrane-Iroquois Falls.

During the first year of Project Excellence, students had no choice but to stay at E.S.C.H.S., move to Iroquois Falls, or switch to another school board. This was not a satisfactory arrangement. Ministry of Education curriculum policies (OSIS) direct school boards to do their best to meet the individual needs of pupils in their jurisdiction. It is clearly idealistic to think of every school meeting every student's needs. It is not unreasonable to think of a school system making a sufficient array of program options available to all students through various schools across the board to satisfy individual needs.

It is to the Cochrane-Iroquois Falls board's credit that the decision to bus students opting out of Project Excellence was adopted and implemented during the second year of the Project. It is also to their credit that they made additional transportation available to enable these students to participate in extra-curricular activities at their new school. This is certainly in keeping with the goals of education and principles of OSIS concerning the breadth of education and the value of extra-curricular programs in schools. At the present, however, the movement is one-way. Provision has been made within the board for students to leave Project Excellence. Equal provision has not been made for students living in the boundaries of Iroquois Falls to join Project Excellence if they choose.

Many students and parents are critical because they perceive Project Excellence as "the only game in town". It is true that not all students perform as well or better in Project Excellence than they did in traditional schools. It is also true that conventionally organized schools in the Province of Ontario do not work equally well for all students. Recent studies of dropout statistics across the province are not encouraging (Radwanski, 1987). Many students in conventionally organized schools would benefit from the option of alternative systems of education like Project Excellence. In sum, the choice needs to work both ways.

The overall goal should be to set up a model school system rather than a model school.

We suggest that the Cochrane-Iroquois Falls school board give serious consideration to expanding the current policies to permit Iroquois Falls students to transfer to E.S.C.H.S., and to provide the necessary transportation. Both schools should be permitted to advertise for students in each other's boundaries.

One effect of this policy would be to stabilize the continuing decline in student enrolment at E.S.C.H.S. due to students transferring out. Paradoxically, the circumstances which motivated the adoption of Project Excellence, i.e., declining enrolment, loss of staff, and the difficulty maintaining courses, have actually been exacerbated by the student transfer phenomenon. Approximately 70 students left Project Excellence for other schools during the first three years. This situation could be offset if students across the board were allowed to enrol in the Project.

Opening up the school system to both options would also alleviate some of the current staffing difficulties at E.S.C.H.S. and I.F.S.S. Because the board does not officially encourage Cochrane students to consider going to Iroquois Falls, there is no control over when students and parents make the decision. The principal at I.F.S.S. usually does not get the news about transfer students for the fall until after enrolment projections and staffing allocations are made the preceding spring. This leads to overcrowding, particularly in general-level classes. Incoming students may not have opportunities to take the courses they want. If the doors were opened freely both ways, the board could require students and parents to declare their intentions in the spring, so that both schools could make more accurate projections of enrolment and staffing needs.

A second major recommendation arising from our interviews with transfer students and principals in the receiving schools concerns the recognition given to work in progress. A number of students said they were made to feel like "traitors" for leaving Project Excellence. The feeling of having done something wrong was heightened by the fact that they were often required to repeat courses in which they had already completed a substantial number of units in Project Excellence. We believe the stigma of leaving the Project can and should be removed, and that this can be done without encouraging students to leave.

Once a student has made the decision to switch, emphasis should be put on accurate assessment and fair recognition of work in progress. It is not the student's fault that Project Excellence allows and even encourages them to end a term or school year with work in progress. Students who opt out of the Project are likely to be behind in credit accumulation. To cast aside the work they have done only makes their situation worse, and increases their antipathy towards the Project.

Although some compensatory measures have been taken on an idiosyncratic basis, assessment and placement policies for student movement within the board's two schools are needed. There seems no logical or philosophical reason why provisions cannot be made for students with at least 15 of the 20 units in a course done to complete that course after they leave the school if they choose. Strict deadlines could be set. Time could be blocked in to a student's schedule during the first term at the other school to periodically spend a day or half-day at E.S.C.H.S., if necessary. E.S.C.H.S. has inaugurated evening hours for adult students, which could also be used for course completion by transfer students. Another option is that provided by the principal at Jeunesse Nord, whereby individualized study programs have been created to enable students to finish some nearly completed courses without penalty. In sum, students should not be penalized in terms of "lost work" simply because they choose to go to another school.

We asked principals in the receiving school what recommendations they had for other school systems considering the implementation of Project Excellence. Both felt that students should have the option of attending the new school or a conventional school (though neither talked about movement in the other direction). They suggested that principals in the receiving schools should visit the other system to get a better understanding of how it works. We would go one step further, and suggest that once a system like Project Excellence is in place, then visits of teachers as well as administrators from neighbouring secondary schools should be organized. The recommendation assumes that entry into the experimental school would not be limited to students within its official boundaries. This kind of exchange has gone on in Cochrane between the feeder elementary schools and E.S.C.H.S. The transition for transfer students would be helped by similar visits between Iroquois Falls and Cochrane (most staff at Jeunesse Nord are former E.S.C.H.S teachers).

11.4.7. Recommendations Concerning Transfers to Other Schools

(42) *Recommendation:* The Cochrane Iroquois Falls-Black River Matheson Board of Education and administration should give serious consideration to adopting a policy whereby students across the board have the option of attending either Project Excellence at E.S.C.H.S. or I.F.S.S. The board should provide appropriate

transportation for students in either Cochrane or Iroquois Falls to attend the school of their choice. Both schools should be permitted to advertise in each other's jurisdiction.

(43) *Recommendation:* The Cochrane Iroquois Falls-Black River Matheson Board of Education and administration should adopt policies and procedures to ensure that students transferring from Project Excellence are given fair recognition for work in progress at the time of their transfer.

(44) *Recommendation:* The board and administration should provide opportunities and financial support (supply teachers, transportation) to enable staff from I.F.S.S. to visit Project Excellence, observe, and talk with teachers in their areas of interest about curriculum, teaching, and learning in the Project.

CHAPTER 12

STUDENT OUTCOMES: TEACHER AND STUDENT PERCEPTIONS

12.1 OVERVIEW

In addition to records of student performance, we gathered information about teacher and student perceptions of student outcomes under Project Excellence. We asked members of each group to comment on students' performance, approach to learning (work habits, study skills), attitudes towards learning and school, and social development.

These findings are based on interviews with all teachers, 39 students, and on items in the student questionnaire (see chapter 7 for survey method details). The student interview sample included students who claimed to be succeeding in Project Excellence and students who reported difficulties in their marks or progress.

The major categories of student outcomes reported in interviews with Project Excellence teachers and students are listed in table 12-1. The direction (positive, negative), source, and frequency of participant comments about student outcomes are summarized to the right of each category. Outcomes marked for each role group were mentioned by three or more interviewees. We caution that *none of these outcomes holds for all students.* Illustrations, survey data, and explanatory comments for outcomes within each broad category -- performance, approach to learning, attitudes, and social development -- follow. Contrasting opinions, i.e, reports of positive and negative outcomes within the same category, are reported where observed in the data.

Table 12-1
Teacher and Student Perceptions of Student Outcomes *

OUTCOME CATEGORY	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
PERFORMANCE		
MARKS	Higher marks (S)	Lower marks (S) Inflated (T)
QUANTITY OF LEARNING	Learning more (S) Doing more (T)	Retaining less (S,T)
QUALITY OF WORK	Improved (T)	Decrease in some skills (T)
PROGRESS TOWARDS GRADUATION	Students advance at own rate (S)	Slower progress (S)
APPROACH TO LEARNING		
INDEPENDENT RESPONSIBILITY	More responsible and self-directed (S,T)	Failure to adapt (S)
MATURITY	Growth in maturity (S,T)	
LEVEL OF EFFORT	Studying more (S)	Worn out (S) Studying less (S)
USE OF TEACHERS AND RESOURCES	Consulting teachers more (S,T)	Consulting teachers less (S)
	Increased use of media centre (S,T)	No increase in library use (S)
	Increased use of library (T)	
ORGANIZATION & PLANNING SKILLS	Better organized (S,T)	
STUDY SKILLS	Better study skills (S)	
ATTITUDE TOWARDS LEARNING		
OVERALL ATTITUDE TOWARDS SCHOOL	Better attitude towards school (S)	Worse attitude towards school (S)
MOTIVATION AND INTEREST	Increased motivation and interest (S,T)	Increased boredom (S)
		Over-commitment to production (T)
SENSE OF FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY	Increased sense of freedom and responsibility (S)	Difficulty adapting (S)
SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT AND SELF-ESTEEM	Greater sense of accomplishment (S,T)	Frustration with lack of progress (S)

* The sources of comments, positive and negative, are indicated for each item. Students (S) and teachers (T) are marked only for those items mentioned by three or more interview respondents from each role group.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT		
SOCIAL RELATIONS WITH ADULTS	More positive relations with teachers (T)	
	Less student-teacher confrontation (T)	
STUDENT-STUDENT COMMUNICATION	Student interaction less inhibited (S,T)	Isolation from other students (T)
	Increased communication among students in different programs/grades (S,T)	Group communication skills undeveloped (T)
GROUP IDENTITY	Students identify with TA groups (S)	Lack of group identity (S,T)
		Students identify mainly with cliques (T)

12.2. PERFORMANCE

We asked students and teachers how Project Excellence had affected student performance. The main categories of outcomes mentioned were marks, quantity of learning, quality of work, and progress towards graduation.

12.2.1. Marks

Positive

Students

"Before I was an average student in the 50's and 60's. Now I get 80's and 90's. It makes you work harder for what you want to accomplish."

"I used to get C's and B's. Now I'm getting As. In this system there's no way you can fail. You can redo it."

"Used to be in 60's and low 70's. Most now in 70's. Some in 80's."

"My grades are way up from last year. I used to be terrible in English. I'm doing better now. I never used to be able to do math. Now I have an easier time. My grades haven't really gone down in any subject."

Negative

Students

"My grades have dropped a little bit. Not all of them. Just a couple. The units are just tough. You really have to work at them."

"Here I do more homework but my marks are lower."

Teachers

"It seems to me marks have been inflated to some extent. It's very difficult to answer this question."

"One thing I don't like is that the marks are a little higher. The kids are overachieving in terms of marks."

"Les élèves auront de bonnes notes, mais pas de profondeur dans le sujet. Mais ils auront bien maîtrisé ce minimum-là."

A majority of the students interviewed and surveyed reported higher marks in all or most subjects. These reports are consistent with our statistical analysis of average marks by subject area (chapter 11). Students attributed their higher marks to various reasons, including more effort ("They are much better because I work hard"), self-motivation ("If you don't want to learn you'll get bad marks"), testing procedures ("I'll rewrite tests until I get a higher mark", "You only get tested in certain areas", "In basic, you can do tests differently"), and help from teachers ("When I need help it's easier than in a regular classroom, because now the teacher talks to an individual").

About a third of the students interviewed reported generally lower marks, or lower marks in major academic subjects like mathematics and English. They attributed this to harder work ("The courses are harder"), and to the difficulty of learning without a teacher giving direct instruction in a classroom ("In the high school I was at before, my history teacher wrote the important things in notes and talked to us a lot. Here, everything is done on your own").

A minority of students interviewed said the course work in Project Excellence was easier. Others in both the positive and negative outcome groups said they found the work in some or all courses harder than before. On the student survey, 57 per cent of the 293 respondents "agreed" with the statement, "Learning with Project Excellence is harder than learning from teachers in a regular class." These comments allay some of the uncertainty about the degree of difficulty of the curriculum and the value of the high marks achieved under Project Excellence (chapter 11).

Given the magnitude of the increases in average marks under Project Excellence for all subject areas (chapter 11) and a majority of students, it is surprising that teachers made little mention of grades in their comments on student outcomes. When they did, their remarks usually conveyed ambivalence about the value of the current marks.

12.2.2. Quantity of Learning

Positive

Students

"I think I'm learning more in all courses now. It's fun. Most of the units I enjoy doing."

"Doing better with marks here. Here you have to work to get your unit finished. You learn more."

Teachers

"Now they know they have to finish to get credit."

"Dans le système traditionnel, tout le monde faisait la même chose. Les élèves devaient tous passer le même examen et même là, si un étudiant échouait, on pouvait quand même le faire passer. Tandis que dans le système actuel, c'est l'élève même qui doit produire et on ne fait passer personne qui ne le mérite pas."

"Retention rate has improved in terms of kids staying till the end of the course."

Negative

Students

"I think this project has helped me, but I think you do learn more in a class."

"I find that I don't remember as much as before. After you're done with a unit, you write a test and that's it. In the old system, you got exams."

"My grades are better than before. I get more work done. I probably remember about the same."

Teachers

"I get frustrated when I go to a seminar and expect students to have background knowledge from something done earlier in the year. Their retention isn't as good."

"I think students think they aren't learning. Or they certainly question how much they retain...whereas before they never would have said 'I'm not learning anything in this system' at the end of the class or year."

"Le contenu de la matière m'inquiète un peu, parce qu'on met beaucoup d'emphase sur la production de l'élève, j'ai peur qu'on ne donne à l'élève qu'un minimum de connaissance dans une matière."

Students were split on the issue of whether they learned more and remembered more in Project Excellence than in the traditional system. Those who said they learned more attributed it mostly to the fact that students in Project Excellence have to do the unit work in order to get a grade. Those who said they learned less attributed it to the lack of teacher lecturing and major exams. On the student survey, 43 per cent of the 293 respondents agreed with the statement "I learn more working in Project Excellence than I did with teachers in a regular classroom." Fifty-four per cent disagreed. For the statement, "When I complete a unit I remember what I learned," 65 per cent agreed and 34 per cent disagreed.

Teachers regard the fact that all students in Project Excellence cannot pass a course without actually completing all the assigned course work as an important positive outcome. A few share or acknowledge the concerns of some students about knowledge retention in Project Excellence. Teachers in some of the academic subjects fear that as a result of the emphasis on making units "doable" in four to six hours, the scope and depth of content coverage has diminished.

12.2.3. Quality of Work

Positive	Negative
"...nette amélioration sur la qualité du travail, dépendant de la consistance du travail de l'étudiant."	"Skill development in typing is down. That problem is not solved yet. I don't know how we are going to solve it. But there must be a way."
"The quality of the work the general level students are giving is really good and that has impressed me."	"Grande déficience dans l'expression orale, français et anglais immersion."

Teachers do acknowledge some skills and knowledge deficits in Project Excellence. The lack of regular opportunities for supervised oral language development, for example, has been a major concern for second language teachers. On the student survey, 41 per cent of the 293 respondents disagreed with the statement, "I get the opportunities I need to learn and speak in French." Teachers of courses which require a lot of drill work, like typing and shorthand, find that student performance has fallen in comparison to before, when students drilled together. In our interviews, students talked about some courses being easier or harder to do in this system, but they rarely commented on changes in the quality of their work, as such.

12.2.4. Progress Towards Graduation

Positive

Students

"You can work at your own pace. No one holds you back."

"You can work ahead if you want."

"Some students can move ahead faster. Others don't."

Negative

Students

"I've fallen way behind. I should be graduating this year, but I won't."

"In the old system I used to do better...In the old system you would get eight or nine credits a year."

"It's positive for marks, but negative for slowing me down."

Students generally acknowledged and appreciated the fact that Project Excellence allows them to work at their own pace. Of the 293 survey respondents, 76 per cent agreed with the statement, "I can really work at my own pace in this school." Among the students interviewed, however, none said that they were accumulating credits more quickly than in the old system. Slower progress is a common outcome and complaint among students who express dissatisfaction with the Project. In the opinion of some students, the gains in achievement and learning have offset concerns about progress.

Credit completion progress is partly controlled by average unit completion time. After two cycles of revision, teachers at E.S.C.H.S. have refined the units to a point where they do take four to six hours to complete. This tends to put a ceiling on how fast a student can progress, unless they want to put in many additional hours. Students who are able to maintain a pace of four to six units a week can accumulate six to eight credits a year. Those who do not keep the pace fall behind. If and when they do get on track, they can proceed at a satisfactory rate, but it is very difficult to actually "catch up" to where they might be if they had worked at that pace all along.

Our analysis of credit completion rates in Project Excellence (chapter 11) indicates that many of the current Grade 9, 10, and 11 students are likely to have difficulty finishing their OSSD in four years. On the student survey 66 per cent of the respondents (N=293) agreed with the statement, "I worry about graduating on time."

Teachers did not voice major concerns about student progress towards graduation. It may be that they have not perceived the scope of the problem, or that they do not fully understand the timeline implications of the current 30 credit system with OACs.

12.3. APPROACH TO LEARNING

Teacher and student views of the effects of Project Excellence on student approaches to learning, i.e., work habits and study skills, were generally positive. These outcomes clustered around the following themes: independent responsibility, maturity, level of effort, use of teachers and resources, organization and planning skills, and study skills.

12.3.1. Independent Responsibility

Positive

Student

"I think what you learn here is how to work on your own."

"Project Excellence helps me to achieve. It teaches you to be responsible."

"J'ai appris à travailler par moi-même. J'ai appris à être plus responsable."

Teacher

"Before, a student could show up in the classroom and sit and vegetate all day. They didn't really have to do a lot if they sat and listened. Now marks are based on what they do. If you don't do it you don't get any marks. I think the students have realized 'Hey, we have to take hold...It's our responsibility... It's not necessarily the teacher's responsibility."

"Je trouve que c'est un système qui est beaucoup plus difficile pour l'élève. Le professeur n'est pas là constamment pour lui dire quoi faire. C'est donc grâce à lui-même s'il réussit."

Negative

Student

"I have a hard time working without teachers to push me. My TA is giving me a hand. I started out well, then slacked off."

"I lost a year of my education because I had a hard time being productive."

"I do not do as much work as I used to. Even if I was just sitting down in the traditional system, I could get something out of the teacher who was talking. I would remember something. Now, some days it's hard to work."

Teacher

"We've lost some students who survived only because they could ride along with the classroom. They got their year by listening and did just enough to get the passing grade and then moved along."

"We still have a lost segment of the school population. We still have the wanderers in the hall that nobody's really getting at."

There is broad consensus among teachers and students that Project Excellence challenges students to take on more independent responsibility for their learning. This was the most universally and strongly emphasized student outcome described. It is equally clear, however, that students vary in their willingness and ability to assume this responsibility. A number of students reported initial difficulties settling down to work, which they later overcame. Several teachers emphasized the growing independence of students in planning and carrying out their school work, as they become accustomed to the system.

One of the student survey items provides an indirect measure of the extent to which students at E.S.C.H.S. claim responsibility for their own learning. Half (51%) of the 293 students responding to the survey "disagreed" with the statement, "I need a teacher pushing me to keep up." We have no data to compare this to other schools or to students in the old program at E.S.C.H.S. However, there seems little doubt that this is a fairly high indication of lack of teacher dependency. The finding is particularly relevant in the context of a composite high school offering academic and practical courses at all levels of difficulty.

12.3.2. Maturity

Positive

Students

"I think it shows me to be more mature, to do things on your own. If you follow your friends you'll never get anything done. It's affected me like that."

"It also teaches you to set your priorities, to do your work and not roam in halls and be with friends."

"With this system it helps me more to think about life and what I want to do. When I came here I didn't know what I wanted to do."

Teachers

"Compared to before, students seemed slow at first to achieve success in their units, but now I find that they are rapidly maturing in their ability to work on their own."

"Je peux le voir beaucoup en éducation coopérative. Les employeurs n'en reviennent pas comment les élèves sont matures, responsables et qu'ils travaillent bien."

Teachers and students agree that students need a certain level of maturity to cope with the responsibility placed on them to organize and carry out their work. Some are more mature than others when they come into the system. Both groups affirm that the system helps students develop the maturity to work on their own.

Some parents seriously question whether all students have the maturity to cope with the independent responsibility demanded in Project Excellence, especially at the Grade 9/10 level (chapter 14). However, they do not question whether the Project helps develop that maturity as an "outcome".

12.3.3. Level of Effort

Positive

Students

"I study more than I used to. I want to get a good mark."

"I study more here for a test. I feel like I can review things more in this system. I can take as long as I like."

"Because you are learning more you have to put more into it."

"It's much easier and less time-consuming."

"Most subjects are easy to study. There's not that much studying to do. You can do the work in school."

Negative

Students

"You don't have the classroom now but you still have the same amount of work to do, if not more. It's like doing homework all day, then going home and doing more homework."

Whenever I do homework in a subject I get annoyed with it after a while... Here everything is done on your own. You get annoyed."

"Mes notes ont baissé au début. Si j'avais été dans le systéme traditionnel mes notes auraient été meilleures et j'aurais fait plus de devoirs. J'aurais travaillé plus fort à cause de l'échéancier."

A majority of the students interviewed reported that they were studying more in Project Excellence than they did in traditional schools. Only a few said they were studying less. Of these, several believe they study less because they have improved their study skills. Some students complained that the pressure to keep working never lets up. Others said the lack of deadlines made it easier to slack off and fall behind.

12.3.4. Use of Teachers and Resources

Positive

Students

"In elementary school the teacher talks to a whole class. Now you just go to the teacher. He or she helps you."

"In the old system you're learning with teachers in a class with other students. You didn't have to go for help. Here you have to go for help when you need it."

"I never used to use the library for information. Now I have to to keep up with units...any information for units in geography or history."

"I use the media centre, but not the library much.

Teachers

"I find there are far more frequent and meaningful approaches to myself in teaching people in my courses. I keep a record of all the students I see and it's increasing monthly."

"I think they are much more creative and open in terms of how they learn. Before they would have said I learn by having the teacher tell me what to do or what the answer is. I don't think many students would say I learn from a teacher."

"They are a lot more inclined to go off on their own and solve a problem now. They are not afraid to do research in the school or public library. They are not too hesitant to ask a teacher for help."

Negative

Students

"I don't go to teachers often. I just ask my friends."

"I don't go very often to teachers."

"I don't use the library much. Just the dictionary for science. It's not required for my courses."

"I haven't used the library at all this year. I haven't had any major projects. I will have to do some with economics. I just go there more for study time."

"Yeah, because it's quiet. I only used library materials once."

For students, learning in Project Excellence begins with the learning guides, not with teachers. The learning guides may lead them to a variety of sources of information.

Teachers are just one of the resources available. Teachers claimed that students were developing better research skills and becoming less dependent on teachers for solutions. Some said students made more and better use of the library and media centre.

Students generally acknowledge that the system leads them to seek out individual help from teachers. Student survey data confirm that a majority of students do go to teachers for help on a regular basis (chapter 7). According to the students interviewed, increased use of the library and media centre resources is subject specific. History and geography are most commonly mentioned. Otherwise, it appears that the library functions more as a study hall than a centre for resource-based learning. Observation of students in the library supports student reports of library use.

12.3.5. Organization and Planning Skills

Positive

Students

"You learn how to organize your day... set a goal. I like the system."

"You study more in the day. I used to study more at night. Now I don't have to. It has helped me learn to work better on my own."

"It's just different. Before you had to do homework by the next day. Now you do it on your own."

Teachers

"Student outcomes in terms of organization and responsibility. I would say a large number, maybe not a majority, but a goodly number of students are better organized than they were in the traditional system."

"I remember saying in the old system kids don't really change until they hit Grade 11, and they are starting to grow up and see. I think we are seeing this sooner now. We're starting to see this in the way that they organize themselves in Grade 10, even Grade 9.

Project Excellence challenges students to set goals, organize their time, and work to accomplish those goals. In order to succeed, students have to learn to manage their time wisely. Some have more difficulty and need more assistance than others to develop these skills. On the student survey, 75 per cent of the respondents "agreed" with the statement, "I'm able to organize my time to get my work done." No negative findings were reported for this area of student outcomes.

12.3.6. Study Skills

Students are generally positive about the impact of Project Excellence on their study skills, although many find the noise level and movement to and from the centres distracting (see chapter 14). A few express concern that the lack of experience taking lecture notes or cramming for exams might be a drawback when they get to college or university (chapter 14). Overall, there were no negative findings reported concerning student study skills.

Positive

Students

"Since I have to do all the reading myself, I've learned how to pick out the important parts. I've learned the importance of comprehending the stuff more."

"The way I used to study was just reading. Now I write out the work I have to study and I study it. It really helps you learn to write it down. Reading you just skim over."

Students

"It's helped me learn more and study better. You have to solve problems yourself."

"It's similar to university or college because there are a lot of distractions. It prepares you to be able to settle down."

12.4. ATTITUDES TOWARDS LEARNING AND SCHOOL

Teacher and student perceptions of Project impact on student attitudes towards learning and school centred on the following outcomes: attitude towards education, motivation to achieve, sense of personal freedom and responsibility, and self-esteem.

12.4.1. Overall Attitude Towards Education

We asked the students interviewed whether being in Project Excellence made any difference in the way they felt about school. Among those interviewed, a few said their attitudes towards school were unchanged. About 20 per cent of those interviewed (8) reported more negative feelings towards school. A majority (22) said the Project had a positive impact on their attitudes towards school. For some the change in attitude was quite dramatic. They went from "hating school" to "liking school", or vice-versa.

12.4.2. Motivation and Interest

A dominant theme among those students reporting positive impact is that Project

Excellence is more interesting, motivating, and fun than traditional elementary and secondary schools. Students attribute this outcome to a variety of reasons, including working at one's own pace, directing one's own learning, better grades, less hassle from teachers, more freedom to socialize and work with friends, and the quality of the learning guides.

Positive

Students

"I'm more interested in it. Not at first. About half-way through the first year. I failed Grade 4 twice. With this system I can catch up. This year I'm really interested."

"This gets you interested in school, because you're doing everything on your own. Here you'll do it 'cause you have to and want to do it yourself. I like that. I didn't at first."

"It either encourages you or discourages you. So far it's encouraged me to do better. It showed me the importance of bettering myself for the 'real university'."

"Je détestais l'école et maintenant j'aime ça...C'est bon, parce que tu n'es pas forcé de travailler."

"C'est plus amusant qu'avant."

Teachers

"I believe that our students are closer to those ministry goals of what a student should be than any other school I've been in...the attitude, the responsiblity, the motivation."

"There appears to be more attention to detail. And kids are more likely to go back to redo work to improve their grade."

Negative

Students

"It's getting boring. When I finish a course it's the same questions every time. The same things."

"Classes were more fun. This is the same thing all the time."

"I miss the class atmosphere."

"It makes you feel more lazy about school. Not caring about it, or at least right now. Maybe I'm thinking about my night work. I'm tired every day. I think I'd like a regular system better. You finish on time. It'll take me an extra year to finish."

Teachers

"It bothers me for kids to take the attitude now that I'm through with that unit I'll never see it again. So are they just doing it to get through it, or are they doing it to learn it?"

"One of the things that's happened that I see as a regressive thing is that students now want credit for everything they do. What is happening now is that a lot of extra-curricular activity in the school is being directed towards getting credits for units, whereas before it was more spontaneous participation."

A minority of students interviewed find Project Excellence less interesting, motivating, and enjoyable than traditional schools. Reasons given focus on the repetitiveness of unit work, missing the stimulation of being in a class, slow progress, and the distraction of friends and noise. Some teachers are concerned that student commitment to "unit production" has taken precedence over commitment to learning.

12.4.3. Sense of Freedom and Responsibility

Positive

Students

"Before you were stuck in a classroom. Now you feel like you have some freedom. I like that."

"Avant l'école c'était de faire le travail que le professeur te donnait. Maintenant...tu vas travailler tout seul. J'aime mieux l'école maintenant, parce que je peux m'avancer."

"C'est mieux parce qu'on a plus de liberté. Les professeurs ne sont pas toujours sur ton dos. Si tu veux de l'aide, tu la demandes."

"Responsibility is good. You learn how things work. I'd rather have the responsibility than not."

Negative

Students

"You have more freedom. Some kids don't know how to use it and take off or fool around."

"Right now I'm having a hard time adjusting to this. I don't have anybody watching over me... Responsibility is a good idea, but hard to do."

"Responsibility...It's like the teachers have put it all on us. It's hard to adapt to. It's too much. Some people can adapt. Some can't."

All students feel the individual freedom and responsibility placed upon them in Project Excellence. Not all students, however, feel comfortable with that responsibility. They are under considerable pressure to keep up, and considerable temptation to slack off. Those who are unable to handle the responsibility and freedom tend to fall behind, and become frustrated with the system.

Student survey respondents were evenly split in their opinions about the amount of freedom and responsibility given in Project Excellence. Of the 293 respondents, 47 per cent "agreed" and 51 per cent "disagreed" with the statement, "I have too much freedom in Project Excellence." On the item, "I have too much responsibility for my own learning in this system", 41 per cent agreed and 56 per cent disagreed.

12.4.4. Sense of Accomplishment and Self-Esteem

Students who succeed in Project Excellence experience a heightened sense of accomplishment. Although they can get help from teachers, they know that they will not get their marks or credits unless they complete the units and tests. Other students feel their learning and progress has been stymied by this system.

Positive

Students

"It makes me study harder. I still don't like being here, but I'm learning more with it."

"I'm learning more and getting better marks. It's impossible to fail. So it helps kids that worry about failing."

"I like it here. You have to work hard, but I like it. I work hard and I can get the work done."

Teachers

"S'ils réussissent bien, ils sont très fiers de nous raconter ça."

"This system lets you finish projects. Students feel they've accomplished something."

Negative

Students

"I don't like it anymore. I don't do anything with my life here."

"I don't like it here. Project Excellence makes me feel more negative. I used to enjoy coming to school. There's a time for school and a time for friends. Now there's no difference."

"I used to enjoy coming to school. Now I'd rather work at home. When I come to school I don't get anything done."

12.5. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Teachers and students spoke of social development outcomes in terms of the quality of social relations with adults, student-student communication, and group identity.

12.5.1. Social Relations with Adults

Positive

Teachers

"Social skills. I think there is a relaxed atmosphere."

"Discipline isn't an issue. Some of their social skills have improved tremendously. They don't feel pressured as much. It's less confrontational."

Teachers

"A student has to go talk to the teacher. That is major. I've had to take students and bring them to a teacher to get them going. And from that point it's OK with Mr...and then you have to do the same thing with another teacher; but as the years go by you don't have to do that anymore. They make their own appointments and interviews. Certainly their social skills develop in that regard."

Teachers agree that the climate in the school is more relaxed and conducive to positive interaction with students. Classroom confrontations generally have disappeared. Some students have to overcome shyness about going to teachers.

12.5.2. Student-Student Communication

Positive

Students

"I like going to school more. You can work with friends. It doesn't matter about the grade level. I have friends at different grades."

"I like school now. I don't like classes. I'm too shy. I wouldn't say anything. Now seminars are only five people or so. I can talk in that group."

Teachers

"The Grade 9 students after the first couple of months mature a lot. They aren't afraid to approach a Grade 11 or 12 student and discuss problems or talk to them."

"It does open up more avenues for a really shy person to interact with people, not just sit in the back of the class. They have to go and talk about certain things. They have to go to seminars. It's not as scary as a big classroom.

"Negative

Teachers

"I hear the kids tell me that they like seminars very much, that they are important, that they like to get together and talk a bit. Because when they work in the centres they work alone. There's no verbal communication."

"Je trouve que le jeune est seul. Pas de discussion, pas d'échange d'idées. Je trouve ça cruel."

Students and teachers were both positive about the opportunities for interaction between older and younger students, and students at different academic levels. They also agreed that opportunities for students to work in small groups in centres and in seminars made it easier for "shy" students to take a more active part in their learning. While some students miss the social atmosphere and dialogue of the traditional classroom, this does not appear to be a generalized sentiment among students across the school. Our observations confirm that there is no lack of student socialization in this school. Furthermore, it often occurs as students are studying, not just in between classes. In the student role chapter, we pointed out that many students do not attend optional seminars where they would have the chance for more structured discussion and group presentations.

12.5.3. Group Identity

Positive

Teachers

"The student body as a whole I think is a lot more tight, a lot more camaraderie. They're not split Grade 9, 10, 11. Those borders have become more muddled now. I think that helps a lot."

Students

You get friends in the TA group and everybody helps everybody, like brothers and sisters. That's the good point. We are like a big family."

"C'est bien d'avoir un conseiller. J'aime le groupe-conseil avec different âges."

Negative

Teachers

"Les élèves manquent beaucoup le fait de la classe titulaire, parce qu'ils ont été habitués à ça. Tout le monde connaissait tout le monde. Rendus ici, les jeunes de 9e n'ont pas le sens d'identification à un groupe."

"Some students don't make friends. It can be a lonesome system. I'm sure they find it difficult to make new friends because no one is doing the same thing at the same time anymore."

"Perhaps there's more cliques. In a class you had everybody at the same level, and maybe people would meet people they wouldn't normally meet, whereas now you don't have that."

Students

"Avant quand on était dans la même classe, c'était un peu comme une famille. On appartient plus à un groupe. Ici on n'est pas du même niveau. Le groupe-conseil ne m'affecte pas du tout."

According to some teachers, the communication barriers between grades and academic levels have been broken down at the expense of "group identity", especially for Grade 9's. At least among the students interviewed, however, loss of group identity was not a widely expressed outcome. Many students are quite positive about their TA groups (see chapter 14). This depends in part on the TA's efforts to foster TA group spirit. Some teachers think that Project Excellence students have fewer opportunities to break out of friendship cliques into broader networks of social relations.

12.6. RELATIVE IMPACT ON DIFFERENT STUDENTS

We asked teachers whether they thought the Project was working equally well for all students. All agreed that this system works better for some students than others, though they differed in the basis for classifying students. A few teachers said that there was no real change from the previous system in terms of successful and unsuccessful students. Others contrasted students in terms of a variety of dimensions as illustrated in these sample quotes:

> "Best for well-motivated and well-parented kids. I used to say above-average intelligence. Now I think it's well- motivated. I think intelligence may not be as much a factor."
>
> "Si le jeune veut, ça va marcher. Si le jeune ne veut pas, que tu fasse les cent mille pas, ça ne donnera rien."
>
> "Not all students are prepared to accept responsibility for their own learning. And if they don't play their part, the results are not good."
>
> "The kids that were really spoon fed before had the hardest time. It was not a matter of brains. Some general kids did a lot better than advanced. Some advanced couldn't take the indepth responsibility."
>
> " I am convinced that this system really works well for advanced level students and for motivated general level students."
>
> "I don't think you can generalize. You can't say basic, general, and advanced, because there are some who hate it at all those levels, and some who thrive in it in each group."
>
> "In talking with the parents you know who's behind them or not. And it shows. It really does show."
>
> "Project Excellence requires a student to be fairly literate...able to read and comprehend and do a lot of writing. Basic level students have a problem unless the course is really simplified because of the literacy requirements."

Self-motivation and responsiblity were the two most frequently mentioned traits of successful students by teachers. Most agreed that intelligence and program level are poor predictors of student performance in Project Excellence. Parent support and situations at home were also said to affect student performance. Unlike secondary school teachers in many conventional schools, teachers in Project Excellence are quite knowledgeable about situations outside the school affecting student performance, due to the frequent calls to parents. Finally, students are more likely to succeed in Project Excellence if they have good literacy skills.

We asked the francophone teachers for their opinions regarding the benefits and drawbacks of the Project for francophone students. The major issue identified was maintenance of courses and French-speaking teachers, due to the loss of francophone students and faculty to the new French Catholic high school (chapter 10). These outcomes were largely effects of OSIS and full funding for secondary schools in the separate school systems, not of Project Excellence.

12.7. CONCLUSIONS ABOUT STUDENT OUTCOMES

This chapter conveys the kinds of student outcomes obtained through Project Excellence in a more comprehensive and holistic way than the quantitative analyses of marks and completion rates reported in chapter 11. While these findings, based on interviews with teachers and students, do not generalize to the whole student population, we believe the overall pattern of outcomes is consistent and clear.

Both positive and negative comments were recorded for most categories of student outcomes. There was greater consensus among students and teachers concerning positive outcomes, than negative outcomes. Thus, while the positive outcomes may not hold for all students, the evidence supporting these outcomes suggests that they apply to a larger proportion of the student population than the negative outcomes.

On the basis of these data, and the quantitative data reported in chapter 11, we derive the following "before and after" picture of student outcomes in Project Excellence. A majority of the students interviewed and surveyed are receiving higher marks, completing more work, and progressing at their own pace. These students have become more responsible and self-directed in their approach to learning, and appear to be achieving this maturity earlier than students in the traditional system. The students are studying more. They have learned to rely less on teachers for answers, and to use them more as a learning resource. They have also learned to seek information from audio-visual media. Project Excellence has helped these students to become better organized and to improve their study skills. They are more motivated to achieve, and find school more interesting than before. They have a greater sense of freedom, responsibility, accomplishment, and self-esteem. Overall, they have a better attitude towards school. Their relationships with teachers have become less confrontational, and they communicate more easily with other students than before. While their sense of belonging to a particular class or grade has decreased, many have acquired a new sense of "family" within their teacher advisor group.

In our judgement, the ensemble of positive outcomes for students described by teachers and students is strikingly consistent with several major provincial goals of education, such as taking responsibility, developing resourcefulness, feelings of self-worth, and good work habits (OSIS, section 1.3; see also chapter 13).

Project Excellence is not immune to negative outcomes. Chief among these is the finding that many students are having difficulty accumulating credits at the normal expected rate to obtain their secondary school diploma in four years. This finding is common to students reporting positive as well as negative results in other outcome categories. The amount of planned content in courses has decreased, but this is balanced by the fact that all students must successfully complete all 20 units in a course to get a mark. Skill development in some subjects has decreased, because individual practice has proven less effective than group practice in those areas. Students vary in the degree to which they take advantage of the opportunities provided in the Project for the development and practice of group communication skills.

While not a negative outcome per se, our student interview and observation findings do suggest that Project expectations for widespread use of the library as a centre for resource-based learning have not yet been obtained. There has certainly been an increase in the use of audio-visual media. Teacher reports of frequent research work in the library are not strongly supported by our data. This is an area the school may wish to work on in future curriculum revisions.

A minority of the students interviewed and surveyed reported an overall negative "before and after" picture of Project impact. These students are receiving lower marks, believe they are remembering less, and are not making satisfactory progress towards graduation. They have had difficulty adapting to the level of individual responsibility required, and have not experienced an improvement in organization and study skills. As a result, they tend to be studying less than before, and are not making good use of teachers as resources. These students are frustrated with their lack of success, and are losing interest in school. They tend to blame the system, and believe it places too much freedom and responsibility on students. They yearn for a return to regular teacher-directed classes with other students. On the basis of this study, it is impossible to say whether these students would actually be more successful and more positive about their schooling in a traditional system.

CHAPTER 13
PROVINCIAL GOALS OF EDUCATION

This chapter responds to the question of whether Project Excellence addresses the requirements of OSIS and the provincial goals of education. Part one deals with the Project response to OSIS, primarily as reflected in Project documents. Part two discusses the effectiveness of Project Excellence on student learning with respect to the 13 goals of education. The analysis in part two synthesizes the collective opinions of our research team, and is based on observations and findings from all the substudies reported herein.

13.1. THE REQUIREMENTS OF OSIS

The requirements of the Ministry of Education circular, "Ontario Schools: Intermediate and Senior Divisions" (OSIS), are far too numerous and detailed to be covered in an evaluation study of this scope. Attention is directed, rather, to those principles and requirements of OSIS which seem most relevant to the organization and implementation of Project Excellence as depicted in our evaluation.

References to relevant sections of OSIS appear throughout this report in the context of specific issues, such as responding to individual differences, advising students, the evaluation of student achievement, parent involvement, credit accumulation, and curriculum planning. In addition, our analysis of 24 courses of study assumes that courses which satisfy ministry guidelines released under OSIS can be judged as effective in addressing the curriculum requirements of OSIS Suggested areas for improvement based on findings from specific components of our evaluation of Project Excellence are highlighted in recommendations throughout the report.

We also looked for overt evidence of the extent to which the administration and teachers were responding to the requirements of OSIS For this part of our analysis, we examined several key E.S.C.H.S. documents pertaining to Project Excellence, to see whether explicit references to the ministry policies were made. Brief descriptions of these four publications follow.

The 1987-88 "E.S.C.H.S. Teacher Handbook" directs teacher advisors "to become familiar with student advancement procedures as explained in OSIS, 1984." The handbook then cites relevant sections of OSIS concerning school program, such as matriculation and diploma requirements, the program leading to university, co-operative education, part-time and returning students. Other parts of the handbook deal with the administrative requirements of OSIS, such as attendance, assessing and recording student progress, reporting to parents, the guidance program, communication to students and parents, and co-instructional activities at E.S.C.H.S.

Two other booklets provide responses to many of the requirements of OSIS The "School Course Calendar" and the "Student Handbook" thoroughly fulfil the requirements regarding school course calendars and other matters of interest to students, such as levels of difficulty of courses, diploma requirements, course descriptions, and the code of student behaviour.

A fourth booklet, provided for all staff members, parents, board members, and anyone who is interested, contains additional evidence of attention to the requirements of OSIS Entitled, "Project Excellence - A Description", it begins by listing the 13 goals of education from OSIS The document asserts that "the Goals of Education stated in OSIS are the overriding goals used to guide this project."

Other sources of documentary evidence as to whether the administration and teachers at E.S.C.H.S. have given explicit attention to the requirements of OSIS in the development and implementation of Project Excellence include: our sample of 26 school courses and the tests for those courses; minutes of school staff and department head meetings; and various staff reports describing the Project history.

On the basis of our study of the above-mentioned policy and implementation documents, we conclude that careful attention has been given to the principles and requirements of OSIS within Project Excellence at E.S.C.H.S. In our report, we have drawn attention to those which have particular relevance to Project Excellence. We have also stated our opinions as to how effectively these principles and requirements are addressed at E.S.C.H.S.

13.2. RESPONSE TO THE PROVINCIAL GOALS OF EDUCATION

The 13 provincial goals of education are listed in table 13-1. The following analysis presents our overall assessment of the effectiveness of Project Excellence in responding to these goals. Upon completion of data gathering and analysis for the various substudies of the evaluation, the research team met to share thoughts and opinions about Project effectiveness relative to each goal. The results of that meeting are communicated here.

It is apparent, upon reflection, that several of the goals of education have a unique relationship to the philosophy, structure, and aims of Project Excellence. Successful implementation of the Project should contribute especially towards helping each student to develop a responsiveness to the processes of learning (goal #1), to develop resourcefulness and adaptability in learning and living (goal #2), to develop a feeling of self-worth (goal #6), and to acquire the skills and attitudes that will lead to satisfaction and productivity in the world of work (goal #11). The onus of responsibility placed on students to plan and organize their own work, for example, is certainly expected to help students develop good work habits, flexibility, initiative, and the ability to cope with stress (goal #11).

It is appropriate to consider the effectiveness of the Project vis-a-vis the other goals, as well. However, in our opinion, the Project design does not itself lead one to predict that students in the school should be faring any better or worse than students in conventional schools on those goals. There is nothing inherent in the Project design, for example, to suggest that students at E.S.C.H.S. would develop a greater respect for the environment (goal #12) than students at any other school.

The analysis that follows begins with those goals of education most closely linked to the explicit goals of Project Excellence. The effectiveness of the Project is then examined in relation to the remaining goals, which apply more generally to the school.

Under the first goal, "develop a responsiveness to the dynamic processes of learning," the ministry lists eight processes which require attention: observing, sensing, inquiring, creating, analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating, and communicating. In our opinion, teachers in Project Excellence have given considerable attention towards this goal in the development of units for the student learning guides. Particularly in academic courses, the curriculum has shifted increasingly away from content presentation to concept development, and towards developing the inquiry skills needed to learn on one's own. The Project goal of incorporating alternative learning modes and media into the units directly supports this goal.

Table 13-1

The Provincial Goals of Education[25]

1. Develop a responsiveness to the dynamic processes of learning.
2. Develop resourcefulness, adaptability, and creativity in learning and living.
3. Acquire the basic knowledge and skills needed to comprehend and express ideas through words, numbers, and other symbols.
4. Develop physical fitness and good health.
5. Gain satisfaction from participating and from sharing the participation of others in various forms of artistic expression.
6. Develop a feeling of self-worth.
7. Develop an understanding of the role of the individual within the family and the role of the family within society.
8. Acquire skills that contribute to self-reliance in solving practical problems in everyday life.
9. Develop a sense of personal responsibility in society at the local, national, and international levels.
10. Develop esteem for the customs, cultures, and beliefs of a wide variety of societal groups.
11. Acquire skills and attitudes that will lead to satisfaction and productivity in the world of work.
12. Develop respect for the environment and a commitment to the wise use of resources.
13. Develop values related to personal, ethical, or religious beliefs and to the common welfare of society.

---

[25] This summary list of the goals of education is reproduced from "Project Excellence - A Description". The goals are defined and clarified in more detail in OSIS, section 1.3.

While the degree to which this goal is being achieved across the curriculum varies on a course-by-course basis, the overall thrust of implementation is positive. There are two components of this goal, however, which are not as effectively addressed as might be desired. One is the disproportionate emphasis on reading and writing in comparison to communication through speaking and listening activities. Second is that teachers in Project Excellence cannot be as responsive to spontaneous learning opportunities as in the traditional approach, where a recent, dramatic event often becomes the subject of spirited discussion in the classroom.

Project Excellence appears to encourage resourcefulness and adaptability in learning (goal #2) beyond what one might expect in a traditional school. The diversity of learning modes in the curriculum, and the shift in teacher role from learning director to learning resource, should broaden the learner's perspective on the sources and means of knowledge acquisition. The long-term goal is to actually provide students with choices from alternative learning modes. To the extent that this is achieved, students will have opportunities to practice learning in different ways, and to better understand their learning styles, strengths and weaknesses. The flexibility of the individualized timetables in Project Excellence also challenges students to adapt their learning approach and pace to situations outside "the classroom", such as part-time work, unexpected illness, and extra-curricular activities (e.g., intramural competitions, field trips).

A number of features about Project Excellence appear to foster and strengthen feelings of self-worth in the students (goal #6). The system is set up to help students take on a large measure of responsibility for their own learning. The teacher advisors provide students with encouragement, assistance in planning, and help in monitoring their progress. Considerable trust is placed in students to exercise self-discipline in attempting to follow through with their plans. TA efforts to help students set attainable short- and long-term goals contribute to realistic self-appraisal, confidence, and sense of achievement. The mastery grading system has eliminated "failure", and resulted in higher marks for most students. Students formerly segregated in basic and special education courses and classrooms are less identifiable and subject to stigmatization than before. All these factors, intrinsic to the Project design, foster enhanced feelings of self-worth and confidence among students.

Some teachers, however, believe the higher marks may give students an inflated picture of their competence relative to students in other schools. Also, on the negative side, is the fact that some students who thrived in a highly structured teacher-directed learning system have experienced great personal difficulty adapting to the freedom and responsibility for learning in Project Excellence. Thus, while the overall impact of the Project has been positive in terms of this goal, some students have experienced frustration and failure relative to their past performance in a traditional system.

There is evidence that Project Excellence helps students to acquire skills and attitudes that will lead to satisfaction and productivity in the world of work (goal #11). This preparation applies equally to all students, not just to those enrolled in certain courses. Students in this system cannot succeed without taking personal responsibility for their work, and demonstrating good organization and work habits. They learn to set goals, to make short-term plans to accomplish those goals, and to experience the satisfaction of task completion.

Students in Project Excellence are held accountable in ways that more closely approximate the world of work. Unsatisfactory work, for example, has to be redone. The student cannot just fail an assignment and move on. Students are also accountable through regular interaction with their teacher advisor for what they do. Accountability is not just a matter of impersonal grades and attendance marks. The close relationship with TAs and more individualized contact with subject teachers helps students to feel more comfortable working with and relating to adults. The rapid growth of co-operative education under Project Excellence has made opportunities for school-related experience in the workplace more accessible to a wider range and number of students than before.

There are some limiting factors in Project Excellence as well as the positive features mentioned above for this goal. Students are held accountable for their work, but there are no strict deadlines, and they know that they can always redo their work. Also, there appears to be less opportunity than before for students to develop the skills of working in groups. The lack of comprehensive examinations in many courses may lessen experiences in coping with stress, but other features of the Project likely balance this, e.g., the ongoing pressure to maintain a satisfactory rate of unit completion in order to accumulate credits and graduate on time.

The preceding goals of education are those which we believe bear a unique relationship to the philosophy, structure, and aims of Project Excellence. The remaining goals do not have special links to the Project design and expectations for students.

Students in Project Excellence, as in any school, are expected to acquire the basic knowledge and skills to communicate and understand through words and numbers (goal #3). Students report that the emphasis on reading and writing in the learning guides has challenged them to improve their literacy skills. In the initial push to get the learning guides developed, teachers did not build in as many opportunities for the development of speaking, listening, and viewing skills. This has, and continues to be, a major focus of ongoing curriculum revision. Considerable attention has been given to the incorporation into the units of modern technologies, e.g., films, video-tapes, and educational software. The one thing students do not get much experience with is listening to teachers lecture. The relevance of this "gap" to life-long learning is questionable, though it may have some "survival skill" relevance to the initial post-secondary experiences of students going on to university or college.

The subject where most concerns are expressed in Project Excellence is mathematics. Although average marks have increased, many students and their parents believe that students have greater difficulty learning mathematical operations and concepts through written units and individual consultation than through continuous teacher-directed explanation and discussion in the classroom. The problems in mathematics are not just a function of the mode of instruction. They relate to such factors as ready access to consultation with teachers, the temptation to delay working on mathematics in favour of other subjects, and the need for students to work steadily towards completion of mathematics courses. Due to the sequential nature of learning in this subject, students who only work erratically on their mathematics units have a hard time retaining skills and concepts from one unit to the next.

On the other hand, students in Project Excellence cannot get grades in mathematics unless they successfully cover and complete the entire 20-unit courses. One could not make the same claim for many conventional mathematics classes. On the balance, we believe it is fair to say that students who complete their mathematics courses are probably learning as much or more than students in traditional schools. The problem is that students are having a more difficult time getting through their mathematics courses in this system. Considerable efforts are being made within the mathematics department and school to resolve these difficulties. The fact that mathematics instruction is said to work well in other schools using this system, such as Bishop Carroll, suggests that the problems experienced in Project Excellence are not necessarily inherent in the system.

There are two goals of education which have a direct, albeit lesser, relation to the structure and aims of Project Excellence. Goal #8 targets the acquisition of skills that contribute to self-reliance in solving practical problems in everyday life. Goal #9 is to develop a sense of personal responsibility in society at the local, national, and international levels. One could certainly make the case that the opportunities and assistance for students to organize and take individual responsibility for their own learning contributes to these goals.

However, as clarified in OSIS (section 1.3), the goal of self-reliance in solving practical problems is more specific to particular subjects and courses that deal with things like the management of personal resources, participation in legal transactions, parenting, the application of accident-prevention techniques, and home maintenance. These skills objectives are dealt with in specific courses, which students may or may not take. There seems little reason to judge Project Excellence as more or less effective than conventional schools in providing opportunities for students to acquire these kinds of skills if they choose.

In terms of developing a sense of personal responsibility, there is strong evidence from students that the Project does enhance acceptance of responsibility for their own actions. In interviews, students frequently said that they thought the freedom and responsibility given in Project Excellence was good preparation for both future education and the world of work. Students also become aware of their responsibility to respect the rights of others, because the potential for students to get their work done in the resource centres depends on the co-operation of all students with norms of self-discipline and conduct.

In our opinion, however, there is nothing special about Project Excellence that relates to the development of civic responsibility at the local, national, and international levels. These kinds of objectives are pursued at the level of individual courses. For example, cosmetology students are expected to perform some community service using skills learned in the course. In history courses, students discuss and follow election issues and procedures. Responses such as these are similar to what one might find in any secondary school.

There are two goals of education which relate more narrowly to specific areas of the curriculum and to extra-curricular activities in the school. The goal of developing physical fitness and good health (goal #4) pertains to physical and health education, some family studies courses, and the occupational health and safety components of some technical studies courses.

In the area of physical education, teachers report that skill development has improved as a result of the skills requirements built into most units. However, the absence of need for continuing, regular attendance in these courses works against the ethos of physical fitness as a way of life. Overall, the increased academic requirements and reduced number of electives in OSIS has probably had a more profound impact on student participation in physical education courses than Project Excellence as such. On the other hand, the flexibility of the timetable has made it easier for students to participate in inter-school and intramural sports without missing out on learning opportunities in a classroom.

The goal of helping students gain satisfaction from participating in various forms of artistic expression (goal #5) is also limited in scope to subject areas like art, music, and literature, and to extra-curricular programs like the choir and drama club. Art and music programs at E.S.C.H.S. are struggling with the same difficulties of maintaining enrolment under the diploma requirements of OSIS as other secondary schools in the province. During the initial two years of the Project, teachers had to pull back on some extra-curricular options, such as the drama club, because of the curriculum development workload and need for time to get adjusted to the new system. By year three, extra-curricular activities were again in full swing. In our opinion, there is nothing particular to the art and music programs in Project Excellence that would suggest that students involved in those courses or activities are doing better or worse than students in conventional schools.

There are some concerns about student's exposure to literature. Teachers found that in order to make literature courses "doable" in 110 hours, they had to reduce the number of pieces of literature they were accustomed to covering in a traditional classroom. The reduction in quantity is compensated in part by the increase in intensity in the study of particular pieces or forms of literature. Teachers also acknowledge that there were no guarantees that students in the old system actually read everything they were assigned. That cannot happen in literature courses in Project Excellence. The librarian reports that students seem to check out fewer novels and spend less time reading for pleasure than in the traditional system.

The goal of developing an understanding of the family and the role of the family in society (goal #7) is addressed in courses in family studies, and to a degree in some social science and literature courses. The curriculum-based opportunities for helping students accomplish this goal are similar to what one would encounter in any secondary school.

There are, however, increased opportunities for parent involvement in a student's education in collaboration with teacher advisors. Thus, students in this system may develop a different perception of the home-school relation than students in a traditional school.

Respect for the environment and the wise use of resources (goal #12) is taught in science, and touched on in some other courses. However, we do not see anything specific in the Project Excellence approach which makes it either more or less effective in achieving this goal. It would appear that the community's considerable dependence upon natural resources, such as lumbering, outdoor recreation, farming, and mining, would make this a particularly important goal for E.S.C.H.S., which is not strongly reflected in the existing curriculum.

The mix of French, English (from various ethnic origins), and Native languages and cultures at E.S.C.H.S. provides an appropriate setting to develop esteem for the customs, cultures, and beliefs of a wide variety of societal groups. The commitment on the part of the administration and teachers to fostering mutual respect and positive intergroup relations is long-standing, and not a function of Project Excellence as such. In fact, Project Excellence was adopted partly out of concern for maintaining low enrolment courses in French for francophone students. Efforts were underway during the year of our study to adapt the Project to the special needs of newly enrolled Native students at E.S.C.H.S. In terms of the goals of multiculturalism, the unique benefits of Project Excellence are its potential for individualizing instruction to meet the diverse needs of a multicultural student body, and the fact that students from all family backgrounds freely intermingle with each other in the resource centres on a daily basis. Attention to multiculturalism in the curriculum is largely dependent on the particular emphases given to that issue in ministry guidelines.

The final goal of education is to develop values related to personal, ethical, or religious beliefs and to the common welfare of society (goal #13). Curricular responses to this goal depend largely on the extent of coverage set out in ministry curriculum guidelines. There is nothing special to the design, aims, and implementation of Project Excellence which suggests that the school is any more or less effective than others in helping students with this goal.

13.3. CONCLUSIONS ABOUT PROJECT EXCELLENCE AND THE GOALS OF EDUCATION

In terms of the 13 provincial goals of education, Project Excellence clearly and uniquely addresses the needs of individual students. We are particularly impressed by the high expectations and structured opportunities provided for all students to develop feelings of self-worth and to develop the skills and attitudes of self-directed learners, such as resourcefulness, adaptability, responsiveness to the different processes of learning, and good work habits.

Although it is difficult as yet to judge the long-term academic outcomes for students in this system, students are certainly provided reasonable opportunities to acquire the basic communication skills necessary to functioning in contemporary society. Moreover, the system assures that all students completing a course attain an equivalent standard in terms of course content and achievement. Concerns about the development of interpersonal communication skills and numeracy skills in this system are noted. There is evidence of action on the part of teachers and the administration, however, to resolve these concerns without relinquishing the basic structure and principles of the system.

With minor exceptions as noted in the preceding analysis, the Project design does not offer a unique response to the remaining goals of education. This is not to say they are ignored, rather that the school response to these goals is probably not much different from what might be found in a conventionally organized school.

In closing, we would like to re-emphasize the apparent success of Project Excellence in fostering students' sense of independent responsibility for learning, and in helping them develop the organizational skills and work habits to function successfully as resource-based rather than teacher-directed learners. The irony is that students get no credit for mastery of these difficult-to-realize goals, despite their prominence in the official goals of education. In traditional schools, there is no organized structure for all students to acquire and develop these kinds of attitudes and skills. In Project Excellence, they constitute a universal part of the school curriculum for all students, curriculum being defined in OSIS as "all student experiences, both instructional and co-instructional, for which the school is responsible."

We believe that students who succeed in this system of education deserve to get some official credit for demonstrating their mastery of the skills they need to succeed. It is with that in mind that we offer the following recommendation.

(50) *Recommendation:* We recommend that the school administration and teachers, in collaboration with the central office and board, approach the Ministry of Education with a proposal to create a special "life skills" credit for students completing a certain number of courses in this system. Specifically, we propose that students be awarded one-third credit towards this course for each six courses completed. This would serve the multiple functions of giving credit where credit is due, providing an extra incentive to students, and helping offset the difficulty of accumulating credits at rates equivalent to students in conventionally organized schools.

PART E: PARTICIPANT ATTITUDES, OPINIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 14

OPINIONS, CONCERNS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS ABOUT PROJECT EXCELLENCE

This chapter provides an overview of common opinions, concerns and recommendations of different role groups about Project Excellence. The chapter begins with a comparison of the current preferences of teachers, students, and parents for Project Excellence or for a traditional school. The strengths of Project Excellence are then presented from the perspective of students, parents, teachers, and the administration. Concerns and recommendations for change follow. The findings are based on interviews with members of all groups, and on the parent and student surveys.

Many of the opinions expressed and recommendations proposed reinforce findings and recommendations presented in previous chapters. A few areas of concern not previously highlighted in this report are identified in this chapter, and recommendations are made where appropriate.

14.1. CURRENT SCHOOL PREFERENCE AND GENERAL OPINIONS

14.1.1. Current School Preference

We asked teachers, students, and parents whether they would stay in Project Excellence or go to a traditional school if given the choice. The results of that poll are displayed in table 14-1.

After three years of implementation, a large majority of teachers agreed that they would choose teaching in Project Excellence over teaching in a traditional school. A few were uncertain, and only two expressed an absolute preference for the traditional system.

Survey responses from students and parents on this question were equally divided between those choosing Project Excellence and those preferring a traditional school. Caution is required in interpreting the significance of this finding. To begin with, we have no similar polls from other schools with which to compare this percentage. This makes it difficult to judge whether the proportion of parents and students preferring another school is greater or less than one might find in any other school. However, given the magnitude of the change for students in Project Excellence, we believe the fact that 50 per cent of parents and

Table 14-1

School Preference of Teachers, Students, and Parents

PREFERENCE	TEACHERS (N = 32)	STUDENTS (N = 293)	PARENTS (N= 184)
PROJECT EXCELLENCE	27 84%	145 50%	93 50%
TRADITIONAL SCHOOL	2 7%	135 46%	82 45%
UNSURE OR NO RESPONSES	3 9%	13 4%	9 5%

students responding to our surveys are now solid supporters of the Project, speaks well for the system, its implementation, and its impact on students.

The fact that the other 50 per cent of parents and students are not committed to the new system indicates that the school still has work to do in terms of reaching students who do not adapt easily to the system, and convincing their parents of its merits. If this figure were greater, it seems unlikely that Project Excellence would have survived its initial three years.

14.1.2. General Opinions of Students and Parents

In our student and parent surveys, we included two further items intended to elicit overall judgements about Project Excellence. The results are summarized in table 14-2.

Table 14-2

Student and Parent General Opinions About Project Excellence

SURVEY ITEM	GROUP	AGREE[26]	UNSURE	DISAGREE	NO RESPONSE
This system of education works well for me.	Students (N=293)	183 62%	NA	102 35%	8 3%
This system of education works well for my child	Parents (N=184)	86 46%	30 17%	67 36%	1 -
I think I'm getting a good education at E.S.C.H.S.	Students (N=293)	193 66%	NA	86 29%	14 5%
I think my child is getting a good education at E.S.C.H.S.	Parents (N=184)	83 45%	49 27%	50 27%	2 1%

---

[26] Items marked "strongly agree" and "agree" are combined here, as are those marked "strongly disagree" and "disagree". The raw frequency distributions appear in the appendixes.

These data indicate that students are generally more positive about Project Excellence than their parents. Comparison with the previous figures for students preferring Project Excellence or a traditional school, suggests that some students with positive opinions of the Project would, nonetheless, go back to a traditional school if given the choice. Our sense from student interviews is that students are convinced that Project Excellence demands more effort to get through high school than a traditional school. Even among those succeeding in the system, there are some who would just as soon go back to teacher-directed learning, deadlines, and classroom instruction, than to continue under the pressure of self-directed and self-paced learning.

14.2. PERCEIVED STRENGTHS OF PROJECT EXCELLENCE

In our interviews we asked members of each role group what they saw as strengths of Project Excellence. This section summarizes their comments in terms of common themes. For purposes of analysis, a theme was regarded as "common" if mentioned in the responses of at least three people interviewed in at least two of the four role groups. The responses of different groups often reflect the particular interests of their position.

The most common statements about *strengths of Project Excellence* can be grouped according to the following major themes:

Table 14-3
Perceived Strengths of Project Excellence

STUDENTS WORK INDEPENDENTLY

STUDENTS WORK AT THEIR OWN PACE

STUDENTS RECEIVE MORE INDIVIDUALIZED ATTENTION

IMPROVED SCHOOL CLIMATE AND TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONS

ENJOYMENT AND STIMULATION OF WORKING IN THE SYSTEM.

BENEFITS OF WORKING TOGETHER OR "COLLEGIALITY"

BENEFITS FOR PARTICULAR GROUPS OF STUDENTS

GROWTH IN STUDENT LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENT

FLEXIBILITY FOR COURSE MAINTENANCE AND SPECIAL PROGRAMS

These strengths are not the only ones that could be expressed about Project Excellence, but represent the most common perceptions of Project participants. Brief explanations for each follow

Students work independently. The most frequently mentioned "strength" of Project Excellence is the emphasis on developing students' ability to work independently. Students often characterize this as "working on your own without pressure from teachers". In practical terms, they like the flexibility to decide for themselves what to work on, where to work, with whom to work, and how long to stick with one thing. Students taking advanced courses and their parents see this as "good preparation for university". Teachers and parents agree that this is a major strength of the Project.

Students work at their own pace. The second most frequently mentioned strength of Project Excellence is the perception that students can work at their own pace. Students and parents tend to emphasize the fact that those who want to are not held back by their peers. Teachers point to the fact that self-paced learning benefits all students, regardless of their aptitudes and the level of difficulty of their courses. Students who might not have kept up with the class in the traditional system can now proceed at their own rate, and may do work at higher levels of difficulty than might otherwise have been possible.

Students receive more individualized attention. Teachers like the fact that direct instruction is now individualized to the needs of individual students or small groups of students sharing similar needs. They see this as a major advantage over the old classroom which often involved a mix of students at different levels or grades, and with different learning styles and personalities. In their TA role, they also point to the benefits of closer monitoring of student progress for all pupils across the school.

Students and parents agree that the potential for more individualized help exists in Project Excellence, from both subject teachers and from TAs. According to students, however, it is up to students to take the initiative and go to teachers. As one said, "The teachers are willing to help you if you let them." TAs are seen as providing supervision and help in planning and organizing schoolwork.

Improved climate and teacher student relations. Teachers frequently mention the relaxed atmosphere in the school as a strength of Project Excellence. This is manifested in fewer teacher and student confrontations, and in more open communication between students and teachers. Teachers also value close relationships with students, especially in their role as teacher advisors. Several students commented on the overall friendliness of teachers, and most said they genuinely liked their TA. Administrators believe that the Project has brought about improved relationships between children and families at home. Our parent and student data neither support nor refute this claim. Teachers, students, and parents confirmed that "shy students" have an easier time in this system communicating with teachers and with other students.

Enjoyment and stimulation of working in the system. Some students said that Project Excellence was "more fun", mainly due to the freedom to organize one's own learning. Some of the parents interviewed reported that their sons or daughters found school more enjoyable now too. Staff spoke of the greater variety in teaching and the increased personal contact between TA and students as sources of enjoyment and stimulation. The administrators remained involved and enthusiastic after three years in seeking solutions to new or continuing problems affecting the school and Project.

Benefits of working with others. Teachers, in particular, spoke of the benefits arising from increased collegial interaction with other teachers. This has resulted in a greater school-wide awareness of and involvement in what other teachers are doing. In their TA role, teachers have ongoing opportunities to interact with other teachers about common problems affecting student performance within and outside their own subject areas. In the departments, teachers have become more familiar with courses other than those assigned to them. This is partly a result of collaboration in curriculum development, and partly because students in a resource centre may ask them for help in other courses.

Many students said they found their TA groups helpful, in the sense that students in the group encourage and support each other. They also cited the lack of restriction on collaboration between friends, and between students at different grade levels.

Administrators believe the system demands that parents assume a greater partnership in their children's education as a result of the ongoing contacts with TAs. Our data suggest that the potential for close partnership between parents and teachers is great, but that the degree to which it is realized varies for different TAs and parents (chapters 5 and 8).

Benefits for particular groups of students. In their comments, some interviewees said the system was particularly well suited to certain groups of students. According to students, it is best "for students who want to learn", and "for students who want to go to university". Teachers and parents both agree that the system works well for students who are highly motivated. Comments such as these suggest that successful students in Project Excellence are not much different from successful students in a traditional school.

There are some discriminating factors, however, which are not just a function of aptitude and educational aspirations. According to teachers and parents, the system works best for students who are mature enough to work on their own, and for students who enjoy working alone. Teachers also note that students who would have difficulty progressing in a regular classroom can succeed in this system because they can work at their own speed.

A number of parents interviewed or surveyed had themselves taken courses under Project Excellence. They said the independent learning materials and resource centres worked well for adults who want to go back to school.

Growth in student learning and achievement. From the perspective of teachers, two major strengths of Project Excellence are that students learn the skills to become independent learners, and that their reading and writing skills improve. Comments from students focus on increased learning, improved literacy skills, study skills, and marks.

Flexibility for course maintenance and special programs. Teachers and administrators agreed that one of the major benefits of Project Excellence is the flexibility that enables the school to maintain courses that otherwise would be dropped or combined due to low enrolment and lack of staff (see chapter 10). Teachers involved in special programs, like adult education, co-operative education, and special education find that these programs thrive as a result of the lack of timetabling restrictions, the availability of independent learning materials, the self-paced learning, and access to help from teachers.

14.3. PERCEIVED WEAKNESSES OF PROJECT EXCELLENCE

In our interviews with teachers, students, parents, and administrators, we asked for perceptions of weaknesses and concerns about Project Excellence. This section begins with weaknesses. As there was considerable overlap between statements of "weaknesses" and "concerns", these have been combined where possible. The next section presents a summary of "concerns". Some of the concerns do not reflect weaknesses in the Project, so much as perceived needs for improvement at this stage in its evolution.

14.3.1. Perceived Weaknesses of Project Excellence

As in our analysis of perceived strengths, we identified a set of common themes which summarize both the shared and the unique comments of each role group concerning Project weaknesses. The most common statements about weaknesses of Project Excellence can be grouped under the following themes.

Table 14-4
Perceived Weaknesses of Project Excellence

LIMITED ACCESS TO TEACHERS AND TO CENTRES

STUDENTS TOO FREE TO WASTE TIME

UNNECESSARY MOVEMENT, NOISE, AND DISTRACTIONS

EASY TO FALL BEHIND IN UNIT PRODUCTION

UNMOTIVATED STUDENTS FALL BEHIND

STUDENTS LACK OF MATURITY AND ACADEMIC BACKGROUND

INSUFFICIENT TEACHER-DIRECTED AND GROUP-LEARNING EXPERIENCES

STUDENTS AND PARENTS HAVE LITTLE CHOICE IN SCHOOLS

LONG-TERM IMPACT FOR STUDENTS IS UNCERTAIN

Interview responses clarify the weaknesses in the Project described by different role groups. The responses of different groups often reveal different sides to similar issues.

Limited access to teachers and to centres. The most frequently voiced complaint among students and parents is lack of ready access to assistance from subject teachers. Students report difficulties finding teachers, and frustration waiting for help while they assist other students. As pointed out elsewhere in this report, student complaints about the availability of teachers must be weighed in relation to the fact that only 10 per cent of the 293 students surveyed said they routinely study in the centres for the courses they are working on. Our observations in resource centres confirm that students do sometimes wait for help. This seems to be an unavoidable characteristic of the system. The other complaint, that centres are sometimes full or closed when a student wants to do work, is definitely a problem, and was a focus of administrative attention during the year of our study (chapter 4). The problem is greatest for small departments with only one or two teachers.

Students are too free to waste time. The second most commonly cited weakness in the Project by students and parents is the amount of freedom students have to waste time. Students say that many of their peers take advantage of this freedom, or simply cannot handle it. They distract students who want to work and fall increasingly behind in their studies. Many students and parents believe there should be more controls and supervision of student time use. As reported in the previous chapter, 47 per cent of the 293 students surveyed believe students have too much freedom. Of 184 parent survey respondents, 49 per cent agreed that students have too much freedom.

Unnecessary movement, noise, and distractions. Students and teachers both speak of the time loss and difficulties in studying due to unnecessary student movement between centres, noise in the halls and some centres, and related distractions. Although there are designated quiet areas in the school, these are often full or not near the resource centre and teachers for the units a student is working on. Of the student survey respondents, 73 per cent agreed that noise and interruptions make it difficult to work. Some of this noise is attributed to students from Jeunesse Nord en route to the gym or cafeteria. While this is no doubt true, our observations confirm that most resource centres are subject to a constant ebb and flow of students. The level of noise in different centres appears to be less a matter of teacher supervision than of departmental policies and norms, and of seating arrangements.

Easy to fall behind in unit production. Students, parents, and teachers talk about the difficulty many students have keeping up their rate of unit completion. This is not just a problem for unmotivated students. Even those who say they are succeeding in Project Excellence say that it is easy to fall behind if a student is not organized, gets involved in too many extra-curricular activities, or succumbs to the temptation to "goof off" for a few days. According to students, it is not difficult to pick up where one left off, but it is quite difficult to catch up to where one should be.

The consequences of falling behind are severe: slower credit accumulation, increasing stress and frustration, and possible delayed graduation. A few teachers said they believe the Project has had an overall negative impact on student progress towards graduation, and that this trend was really beginning to show up during the third year of implementation.

Unmotivated students fall behind. Related to the previous point is the fact that students who are unmotivated and do not produce cannot "slide by" and still graduate in Project Excellence. Simply stated, a student cannot finish unless he/she completes the units in the courses taken. According to teachers, some students do not respond to assistance from teachers and TAs, and some parents refuse to get involved. According to students, some students "don't want to learn". Since students cannot actually fail a course, these students languish in school with incomplete courses, and may eventually drop out or transfer.

It seems ironic to label this situation a "weakness" of the Project. It implies that the conventional practice of granting credits and diplomas to students who may not merit them on the basis of school performance is preferable to a system that actually sets minimum performance standards for all students. In our opinion, the staff at E.S.C.H.S. have sought and were continuing to seek effective ways to adapt the Project and to assist the "unmotivated students", without relaxing the performance expectations. We agree with this approach, and believe the solution for students who cannot or will not adapt to this system is for school system officials to ensure that they have access to attend another more conventional school.

Some students lack the maturity and academic background to succeed. Parents frequently express the opinion that not all Grade 9 and 10 students are mature enough to cope with the level of student responsibility and freedom provided in Project Excellence. The issue of "too much freedom" has at least two dimensions: too much freedom to choose what work is to be done, and the lack of good choice by some students. Some parents believe that students' work should be more structured to give them a better sense of what, when, and how to do it. They do not begrudge the Project for attempting to cultivate this aspect of student development; however, they do object to the fact that students who are slower to mature are penalized. They are likely to fall behind in credit completion and not graduate in the normal time frame.

Our findings on student outcomes suggest the 1987/88 Grade 9 students were, on the whole, more successful in terms of credit completion than Grade 9 students in the first two years of the Project (chapter 11). We concluded that efforts to induct students into the system are showing positive results. Again, we believe the strengths and viability of this system can be maintained without resorting to dismantling its fundamental features. Our recommendations throughout this report support Project efforts to adapt the system for students with specific difficulties. Some teachers called attention to the current need to make the system work better for Native students whose academic backgrounds are not as strong as many of their non-Native peers.

Insufficient teacher-directed and group learning experiences. Some students, parents, and teachers believe the Project should provide more opportunities for teacher-directed group learning experiences, in either seminar or classroom settings. However, they describe this "weakness" in different ways.

For students, seminars help structure their progress in a course, and provide a chance for more conventional teacher-directed explanation and discussion. Students tend to talk about the need for more seminars in specific courses like mathematics and physics, which are hard to master from written units alone. They note that the frequency of seminars diminishes in the senior grades (11, 12, OACs). Some parents agree that the Project does not require enough small group interaction and teacher-directed learning.

Some teachers point to the lack of regular contexts for students to acquire and practice group communication skills, and the skills of learning in a conventional classroom from lectures, notes, and group discussion. The latter are considered necessary survival skills for academic work in university and college.

While not denying the validity of these criticisms, it is important to recall the previous finding (chapter 7) that many students do not presently attend optional seminars. The solution is not just to provide more, but also to help students take better advantage of what is already there.

Some Project Excellence teachers view the lack of traditional opportunities for classroom instruction as a "weakness", because they sincerely enjoyed that aspect of teaching.

Students and parents have little choice in schools. This is not a "weakness" of the way Project Excellence is implemented in the school, rather of its implementation in the school system. In fact, students can transfer to Iroquois Falls, and francophone students who are Catholic and desire a French-language education can transfer to the separate school system. The issue is whether it is fair to force students to bus to another community or to switch school boards, if they do not want to continue in a system of education like Project Excellence. Some parents, students, and teachers believe that this type of school should only be put in place in communities which have the resources to provide a comparable traditional school accessible to all students in the community.

The paradox here is that the "choice of school" standard is rarely applied to conventional schools, despite continuing evidence of high dropout rates (Radwanski, 1987). We agree with the need for a reasonable choice, but believe the choice should work both ways (chapter 11).

Long-term impact for students is unknown. A number of parents and teachers highlighted the uncertainty surrounding the long-term impact of Project Excellence, particularly as it relates to the post-secondary performance of students in universities and colleges. This is perceived as a "weakness" of the Project, because people felt they knew what to expect from graduates of the old school. This uncertainty about Project Excellence creates understandable anxiety about the quality of education being provided in this system. Future surveys of the first year performance of students going on to universities and colleges should help reduce this uncertainty. Further ministry-sponsored evaluations in other schools adopting this system will also help.

14.4 CONCERNS OF PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

14.4.1. Student and Parent Concerns

The major current concerns of students and parents in Project Excellence are highlighted in the preceding discussion and in previous chapters of this report (chapters 7, 8, 11, and 12). Common student concerns include graduating on time, keeping pace with unit production, access to teachers for help, additional help in mathematics, and the distraction to studying of noise and student movement in the halls and centres. With the exception of additional help in mathematics, recommendations focussing on these concerns appear in previous sections of this report.

Student complaints and demands for additional help in mathematics have plagued the Project since year one. According to teachers, many students delayed working on their mathematics courses until the end of that year. This put them in a time bind, led to long hours of work at home, and created long line-ups to consult with the mathematics teachers. Student and parent doubts that the system works for mathematics have persisted ever since. Many students and parents continue to insist that students cannot succeed in mathematics without more teacher direction and explanation in seminars or classes.

We do not want to dismiss student and parent concerns about learning mathematics in Project Excellence. Our observations in the mathematics centre confirm that lineups to see the mathematics teachers are commonplace. However, the mathematics department and administration have been very active in trying to address and resolve these concerns. TAs are directed to monitor student work plans to ensure that they do not leave mathematics courses until the end of the school year. Many more mathematics seminars are offered, particularly for Grades 9 and 10. Some mathematics teachers have video-taped lectures and demonstrations for different units. Computer software for mathematics has been acquired. Exams have been reintroduced in most mathematics courses. The department head visited Bishop Carroll during year two of the Project. For the year following our study, another mathematics teacher was to be hired, and the mathematics centre was to be relocated next to the commercial centre to provide easier access to microcomputers and to the teachers responsible for business mathematics and accounting. We have nothing additional to recommend for mathematics instruction, and believe serious efforts are being made to address the legitimate concerns of students and parents about this area. The suggestion by some students and parents that mathematics be taught as a traditional course does not seem warranted, given the fact that mathematics is working in other systems, such as

Bishop Carroll and Georges-Vanier. For the time being, therefore, we support the continuing efforts of the staff to adapt the mathematics program to the system and student needs.

Many of the concerns of parents relate to those of their children. Parents who were satisfied with the Project expressed few concerns about the implementation of Project Excellence or their children's progress. Thus, *the list of parent concerns is more reflective of the views of dissatisfied parents than of parents in general.*

The most common parent concerns expressed in interviews and the survey include the following: frustration at home with unmotivated and unsuccessful students; poor communication with TAs; the immaturity or inability of some students to handle the freedom and responsibility in Project Excellence; students falling behind in credit accumulation; access to help from teachers; retention of learning; experience with exams; grade inflation; perceived need for more student interaction in group learning situations; perceived need for more teacher-directed instruction in mathematics; perceived need overall for less freedom, more structure and supervision; and the limited choice in schools. These parent concerns are addressed throughout this report.

14.4.2. The Concerns of Teachers

Many of the concerns of teachers have been reviewed in depth in previous chapters (chapters 4 and 12). These include time management as it relates to curriculum work and marking; the need for more ideas about effective ways of motivating and assisting students having difficulty succeeding in the system; how to deal with parents who do not co-operate in working with students; parent misunderstanding of the Project and teacher roles; fresh ideas about ways of improving the curriculum and instruction; and isolation from colleagues in other schools. Recommendations in chapters 5, 7, 8, and 10 address most of these concerns.

Teacher concerns about curriculum improvement encompass a number of issues beyond the question of time, including strategies and methods for concept development, use of alternative learning resources, and evaluation of student achievement. After three years of intensive curriculum development and revision, teachers are running out of ideas, yet still feel the need for refinement in the existing learning guides. In chapter 10, we offered several recommendations to assist with curriculum improvement, such as extended consultation with subject area curriculum experts, and in-service in the pedagogical uses of audio-visual and computer technologies.

Teacher concerns about the improvement of curriculum and instruction are related to the irrelevance of traditional in-service opportunities to teaching in Project Excellence, and to the fact that teachers have little opportunity for sharing ideas and experiences with teachers in similar schools. We believe that the Ministry of Education could facilitate linkages between schools organized wholly or in part on individualized learning systems throughout the province (see chapter 15), perhaps through a provincial conference.

We have two further recommendations concerning the ongoing improvement of curriculum and instruction in Project Excellence. First, we believe the staff could benefit from further investigation of mastery learning theory and application, in particular, the feedback and follow-up procedures. One of the concerns expressed by Project participants is how much students remember after they take a unit test. Another is that some students spend precious time redoing tests for the sake of a slightly higher mark. A third is that some students take too long to finish units and courses. This system, like many others attempting to apply mastery learning techniques, may not be structuring the feedback and follow-up stage of the learning process as effectively as possible (Bloom, 1987).

Second, we believe that the effectiveness of small group learning as practised in seminars has been essentially taken for granted. We recommend that the school administration consider seeking in-service opportunities for teachers focussing on effective approaches to small group learning, such as co-operative learning.

14.4.3. Concerns of the Administration

"The administration" in this section refers to the principal, the two vice-principals, department heads, and central office officials. Role specific administrative concerns were covered in chapter 6. Here we highlight concerns of school and school system administrators which pertain to Project Excellence as a whole. These are listed in table 14-5.

Table 14-5

Concerns of the Administration

FINDING BETTER WAYS TO ENHANCE OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS

ADDRESSING NEEDS OF SPECIAL GROUPS (I.E., NATIVE STUDENTS)

FINDING BETTER WAYS TO DIAGNOSE STUDENT LEARNING STYLES AND TO USE THAT INFORMATION TO ADAPT CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

MONITORING THE CONTINUITY OF STUDENT PROGRESS TOWARDS COURSE COMPLETION AND GRADUATION

IMPROVING THE DIVERSITY AND QUALITY OF THE CURRICULUM

FINDING OUTSIDE EXPERTISE TO HELP SOLVE PROBLEMS AND PROVIDE NEW IDEAS

FINDING A WAY TO CREDIT STUDENTS FOR MASTERING THE INDEPENDENT LEARNING SKILLS TO SUCCEED IN THIS SYSTEM

FINDING WAYS TO DEVELOP PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND COMMUNITY UNDERSTANDING OF PROJECT EXCELLENCE

RECRUITING NEW STAFF

MAINTAINING THE VISION AND GOALS OF THE PROJECT REGARDLESS OF EXTERNAL CHANGES AND ENROLMENT DECLINE

DEALING WITH THE IMPACT OF SHARED FACILITIES WITH JEUNESSE NORD

As with the other role groups, many of these concerns have been considered in depth elsewhere in this report.

During year three of implementation, the major concerns of Project Excellence administrators related to finding ways to nurture the continuation of Project Excellence within the limits placed on it by the context and other factors. Their primary concern was to maintain the vision and goals, and to progressively refine implementation of the Project towards those ideals.

While maintaining a search for ways to enhance Project outcomes for all students, the administration was increasingly focusing on identifying the needs and finding solutions for the problems of various special populations within the school. At the time of our study, attention centred on Native students and on students having difficulty organizing their studying and concentrating.

In addition, school administrators were beginning to look at students who were enrolled in courses but "inactive". Teachers talked informally about students who had been registered in some courses for as long as two years, and who were not doing anything to finish. Several department heads began reviewing departmental enrolment records to identify how many inactive students there were, and to call them in to find out their reasons for not completing these courses. Recommendations in chapter 11 for a promotion policy and check points for teacher consultation with students in their courses should help alleviate this problem.

Administrators also spoke of needs to improve teacher skills in identifying the learning styles of students for the purpose of adapting curriculum and instruction. There is much greater flexibility to individualize programs in relation to student learning styles in Project Excellence than in a traditional classroom of one teacher and 20 to 30 students. This concern has not been highlighted elsewhere in our study, but warrants serious consideration. It is a crucial area of Project implementation where teacher skills have been largely taken for granted thus far.

We suggest that attention might be directed initially to identifying students with reading problems. A number of teachers and students talked about the difficulty some have coping with heavy reading requirements of the learning guides. We recommend that the administration and teachers investigate the status of reading in the school, as well as the availability of remediation or alternatives to reading in the existing curriculum for students who may not be good readers.

In the eyes of administrators, the initial problems of unit development, unit length and clarity, had largely been surmounted by year three. At this time, their main concerns were the quality of the curriculum and the incorporation of a wider range of resources to accommodate different ways of learning. Administrators are particularly adamant about the need for external assistance to help teachers evaluate and refine the curriculum. Recommendations in chapter 10 and in the preceding section on teacher concerns address the issues of curriculum improvement.

Another concern, voiced by some members of the administration, is that students get no official credit for acquiring and demonstrating the independent responsibility and self-directed learning skills required to succeed in Project Excellence. The recommendation in chapter 13 to develop a proposal for ministry approval of a life skills credit based on the successful completion of a fixed number of courses addresses this concern.

The ambivalent response of some parents to Project Excellence is a further focus of administrator concern:

> "We are watching the attitudes of parents carefully. We know there are some that are frustrated or burned out. I think it always existed in the traditional system, this problem of frustration, but it only arose at reporting time. We report all the time now, so it's around all the time. We know some feel they weren't consulted and don't like that. What this is really about is the raising of kids. With every year attitudes are turning round. We are re-educating parents about working with the school and their kids. We can see this in the Parent Committee. Increased contact and communication seem to make a difference. We are not sure what to do about this, but it's always on our minds."

The school and school system administrators tend to view parent complaints as part of a natural process of the change, though the data presented in this report suggest that parents have a sound basis for many of their concerns. Certainly, the response of parents to the survey item concerning their preference of Project Excellence (50%) or a traditional school (45%, plus 5% "unsure") indicates the importance of more work with the community. Recommendations for improvement in parent involvement and understanding appear in chapters 5 and 8.

A final major area of administrative concern is to buffer and protect the system from the impact of various contextual factors that threaten its maintenance and continued development. These include such things as the continuing decline in enrolment and loss of staff, replacement of staff that depart, the increased academic credit requirements of OSIS, and the need for space in the context of shared facilities arrangements with Jeunesse Nord.

14.5. PARTICIPANT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROJECT EXCELLENCE

In our interviews, we asked teachers, administrators, students, and parents for their recommendations for Project Excellence. Participant recommendations were both general and role specific, and covered many dimensions of Project implementation. A chart listing and comparing the recommendations of different role groups appears in Appendix P.

The issues and concerns underlying most of these recommendations have been discussed in detail elsewhere in this report. Our analysis concurs with many of the recommendations. Others, while not directly supported in our analysis, certainly merit consideration by the administration and staff. On the other hand, there are two significant recommendations which we are reluctant to support: (1) the suggestion to employ teacher aides; (2) the suggestion to offer traditional classes in some courses.

On the face of it, the possibility of employing teacher aides or tutors to supplement teachers in high enrolment subjects where there are high demands for teacher help seems reasonable. We were told that Bishop Carroll School in Calgary uses teacher aides. However, we do not believe the "teacher aide" solution is presently suited to the situation at E.S.C.H.S. Our reluctance is based on two considerations.

First, the public perception that teachers in Project Excellence are not teaching persists for certain segments of the community and some students. Potential benefits to students and teachers notwithstanding, to bring in teacher aides at this point would likely give added impetus to this negative perception of the Project. It could also reduce the already diminished frequency of teacher-student contact, particularly among those students having the greatest need for teacher expertise.

Second, we ourselves are skeptical of the implications of using teacher aides on the quality of teaching in Project Excellence. The Project ideal of "not doing for students what they can do for themselves" encompasses the expectation that teachers will help students learn to find the answers to their questions. This is a challenging mandate, even for experienced teachers. We believe that teacher aides might be particularly susceptible to the pressure from students to simply dispense answers.

The second participant recommendation which we are reluctant to support is the suggestion, mainly from some parents and students, that the school re-introduce traditional classes in some courses (e.g., mathematics). One version of this suggestion is to provide more traditional classes at the Grade 9 and 10 levels. Another version is to offer students a choice of traditional classes or the independent learning system. These modifications might be possible in a larger school with more teachers and more space available. With its present staffing and shared facilities arrangements, however, the possibility of offering a dual system does not seem feasible at E.S.C.H.S. In addition, reversion to the traditional system seems contrary to the spirit, philosophy, and aims of Project Excellence.

We believe continued efforts to improve the scheduling of seminars and to increase student participation in seminars are the most appropriate "in-house" solution to these concerns at the present time. The possibility of transfer to the board's other high school in Iroquois Falls will remain an option for students who are unwilling or unable to adapt to the system.

14.6. RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON CONCERNS OF PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

(51) *Recommendation:* We recommend that the school administration and teachers review their mastery learning approach in light of mastery learning theories and models, especially the methods of corrective feedback and follow-up for student errors.

(52) *Recommendation:* We recommend that the school administration consider seeking in-service opportunities for teachers on effective approaches to small group learning, such as co-operative learning.

(53) *Recommendation:* We recommend that the school administration consider seeking in-service and consultative assistance for teachers in methods of diagnosing and adapting curriculum and instruction to student learning styles.

(54) *Recommendation:* We recommend that the administration and teachers investigate the status of student reading skills, as well as the availability of remediation or alternatives in the existing program for students who may not be good readers.

(55) *Recommendation:* We recommend that the Ministry of Education assist the school administration in identifying appropriate in-service resources within and outside the province.

(56) *Recommendation:* In order to provide a forum for discussion and contact between schools with individualized learning programs like Project Excellence, we recommend that the Ministry of Education link up interested schools, perhaps through a provincial conference.

PART F: DIFFUSION FEASIBILITY

CHAPTER 15

DIFFUSION FEASIBILITY STUDY

Our contract required us to investigate the feasibility of Project Excellence being applied in other schools and, in particular, the feasibility of introducing such a program in schools of more than 500 students. This chapter outlines the procedures used to gather data, and considers the following factors relating to the transferability of the concepts involved: (1) the extent to which individualized learning programs are already established in secondary schools throughout the province; (2) the nature of the programs; (3) the plans that have been or are being considered by other schools for the implementation of an individualized learning program; and (4) the factors that must be taken into consideration in introducing and implementing such a program.

15.1. SURVEY OF ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS WITH SIMILAR PROGRAMS

This section of the study examines the extent to which individualized or independent learning programs are offered in Ontario secondary schools, and the nature of those programs.

15.1.1. Procedures

In an attempt to locate schools already operating independent learning programs, we initially made an inquiry to the various regional directors of education throughout the province requesting them to identify such schools. The regional directors were unable to do so.

We then sent a questionnaire, accompanied by a description of the Cochrane program, directly to the directors of education of 69 Ontario school boards, representing all regional directorates in the province, to ascertain if any schools in their jurisdictions were organized, either in whole or in part, on any type of independent learning basis. The directors were also asked to indicate the names of persons in their boards who were most knowledgeable of the program so that follow-up interviews could be conducted.

Fifty-six, or 81 per cent, of the 69 school boards responded to the questionnaires. Of these boards, 21 indicated that they had individualized programs within their jurisdictions. Seventeen boards with a total of 25 different programs were selected for interviews. A detailed questionnaire was designed to direct the interviews and data were collected for the 25 programs under the following general headings:

A. Historical Data and Rationale
B. Program Characteristics
C. Resources
D. Parent Involvement
E. Outcome

These headings will be used to guide the analysis of the findings.

15.1.2. Historical Data and Rationale

Type of Program. Of the 25 programs reported, 14 have been classified as alternative schools, which means that they are separate entities with their own administration and staff. All of them have a ceiling on enrolment and therefore, in most cases, have waiting lists for admission. Of these alternative schools, three are exclusively for adults, three are primarily for adult re-entry but offer programs for day-school students as well, five offer an individualized program for all courses, two offer an individualized program for most courses, and one has a blend of individual and group instruction. All of these alternative schools include an increasing proportion of adult students in their enrolment. The three alternative schools for adults only are included in table 15-1, but are not included in the analysis thereafter since the information is not pertinent to this study. These three programs represent only a small sample of those offered exclusively for adults by Ontario school boards.

Nine programs are offered as part of, or as a supplement to, the regular school program. Of these, two schools use outcome-based learning in one subject, four programs are individualized for one subject, one is a withdrawal program for identified gifted students, and two small secondary schools use individualized programming as a means of offering students a full selection of credit courses.

Two programs, one exclusively for adults and one for day school students, are just in the planning stage and therefore, with the exception of table 15-1, are not referred to in the remainder of this report.

The distribution and classification of the programs are shown in table 15-1. The programs are described in more detail under program characteristics.

Table 15-1

Classification of Individualized Programs in Other Schools

TYPE OF PROGRAM	ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS	NUMBER
A. Alternative School		14
1. Exclusively for adult re-entry	16+ years and out of school for at least three months; ability to work at least at the general level.	3
2. Primarily for adult re-entry	maturity; day-school students at request of sending principal	3
3. Flexible schedule, individualized	usually 16+ years with at least 10 intermediate credits completed	5
4. Individualized in one or more subjects	admission based on individual need	2
5. Blend of individual and group work	above average achievement with at least 14 credits completed	1
B. In Regular School		9
6. Outcome-based learning for one subject	regular	2
7. Individualized for one subject	regular	4
8. Withdrawal	identified as gifted	1
9. Small school supplement	regular	2
C. In Planning Stage		2

Of the twenty programs included in the analysis, two are in their first year of operation, nine have been operating for a 2 to 5 year period, five have been in operation for 6 to 10 years, and the remaining four programs have been operating for 12 to 17 years.

Reasons for establishing the program. The following are some of the most common reasons given for initiating programs of this nature. The numbers in brackets indicate the number of programs fitting each description.

1. To help each student to fulfill the objectives of the course. (5)
2. To fill an identified community need to assist dropouts and other adults to complete courses. (4)
3. To attempt to fit the secondary school program to the individual needs of students. (3)
4. To accommodate adults who wish to re-enter to upgrade their academic qualifications and/or to complete a secondary school program. (3)
5. To serve the needs of a certain group of students who cannot function well in a traditional, highly structured, school setting. (2)
6. To compensate for the program limitations of a small secondary school. (2)
7. To provide a differentiated program for bright, but bored, students. (1)

Items three and six correspond most closely to the circumstances motivating the adoption of Project Excellence at E.S.C.H.S. While some of the programs were established to try to accommodate adult students, there is a recognition that some non-adult students require a different setting than can be accommodated in the regular school program. It is rare, however, for these independent study programs to be adopted for the purpose of providing more individualized instruction to all students. Like E.S.C.H.S., the two small secondary schools have tried to compensate for their program limitations by organizing to offer some form of individualized programming.

15.1.3 Program Characteristics

Program design and admission requirements. A brief description of some of the programs gives an indication of the variety represented.

- A broad spectrum of general and advanced level courses is offered in Grades 9-12, with most courses at the general level. Students continuously enter and leave the program.

- Adults can upgrade in specific areas.
- Students are granted maturity credits based on work or life experiences. A minimum of three credits is taken in the alternate setting.
- All core subjects except sciences are available.
- All subjects except technical and physical education are offered. The curriculum guidelines are interpreted freely and flexibly.
- The program has three stages. Stage one is a life skills program of 5-6 weeks. Stage two is a co-operative education program of 6-7 weeks. This is followed by the academic program using the Independent Learning Centre materials.
- All courses in the science department use outcome-based learning. This is not an individualized instruction program but is an adaptation of mastery learning which is an integrated instructional system for creating a learning process in which most students can achieve at a high level.
- Grade 9 and 10 basic level mathematics uses an adaptation of mastery learning.
- The OAC biology course is criterion referenced with individualized, independent study.
- Up to 20 per cent of each English course has an independent study component.
- Up to 3 per cent of the students are involved in the enrichment program. It could be for one subject or several subjects depending on the students' needs and interests.
- Every student has a 5-period day each semester. One period is for supervised study. Regular teachers give specific assignments to be done during this period under the guidance of a teacher. The time is counted towards the 110 hours required for a full credit in the regular courses. All students in the school are required to be involved.
- The Independent Learning Centre materials are needed when there is a timetable conflict or when the school does not offer a particular course. Twenty-five or more students are enrolled at any one time.

The final two paragraphs above describe alternatives offered in two small secondary schools. One school uses an internal scheduling modification to give increased flexibility for course offerings. The other allows students to gain credits through the use of the Ontario Ministry of Education's Independent Learning Centre materials with minimal teacher supervision.

Levels of difficulty and grade levels. While most of the programs are offered at the general level of difficulty in senior grades, a broad range of offerings exists, as shown in table 15-2 and table 15-3; however, none of the schools surveyed offers a program which covers all subject areas, grades, and academic levels, like Project Excellence.

Table 15-2

Levels of Difficulty of Individualized Programs in Other Schools

DIFFICULTY LEVEL	NUMBER OF PROGRAMS
Basic	3
General	16
Advanced	15

Table 15-3

Grade Levels of Individualized Programs in Other Schools

GRADE LEVEL	NUMBER OF PROGRAMS
OAC/Grade 13	10
Grade 12	14
Grade 11	15
Grade 10	12
Grade 9	10

Scheduling pattern. With the exception of the three predominantly adult re-entry programs which have continuous intake, the programs are semestered. None of the programs surveyed allows students the flexibility of timetabling their own programs in consultation with teachers.

Basic principles on which the program operates. A number of basic principles on which the programs operate were enunciated by the respondents and the more prevalent ones are summarized in descending order of frequency of selection.

1. Regular class attendance is required.
2. The teacher and student meet at least once each week on a pre-arranged schedule because student-teacher conferencing is an essential part of the program.
3. Detailed assignments are closely supervised by teachers.
4. The program is strictly independent learning with a teacher advisor.

5. The program is based on a co-operative model with agreement on expectations by the resource teacher, classroom teacher, and student.
6. Independent Learning Centre materials are adhered to and a specific amount of work is expected each week.

The data indicated that nearly half of the programs have regular, daily class attendance as one of the requirements. This requirement may be based on the assumption that teachers' planning, organization, and interactions with students on a daily basis help structure the learning process. Students in all the programs are closely followed by either their subject teacher or a teacher advisor. Project Excellence differs in that more freedom and responsibility is placed on students to structure their own schedule and learning. Regular contact with teachers for advice, monitoring, and assistance is also important. Students in Project Excellence, however, have ready access to help from a broader range of teachers than students in the other programs surveyed.

Teacher Function. In approximately one-third of the programs, the teacher carries out a traditional, direct teaching role. In other instances, the teacher acts as an advisor, facilitator, tutor, monitor, or guidance resource. In well over half the cases reported, the teacher's day was organized as regularly scheduled periods. Others had flexible schedules, including evenings and scheduled appointments. In one case, the teacher was scheduled into half-day blocks, and in another case, no school time was allotted because the teacher had this responsibility as an extra duty. The combined role of subject consultant, teacher advisor, and curriculum developer in Project Excellence appears to be unique. None of the other programs reviewed included all three as part of the official role and workday of teachers.

Evaluation of Student Progress. In most cases standard procedures are used for evaluating student progress, that is, report cards are sent home at regular intervals during the year. Other methods of evaluation are used and some of the more prominent of these are listed below.

- Peer and self evaluation.
- Progress audit where staff reviews all students and follows up with letters to students and/or parents.
- Weekly "status of students" meetings to review progress.

- Unit tests are based on the Independent Learning Centre materials.
- Measurement of success is based on regular monitoring by teachers.
- Formative evaluation is followed by enrichment or correctives, then by summative evaluation for each unit.
- All assignments are marked by the teacher and this constitutes most of the evaluation.
- Study-room teachers grade students three times during each semester on attendance, behaviour and work habits, and this has a value of 10 per cent for each subject mark.

15.1.4 Resources

Learning Materials. Independent Learning Centre materials are used extensively in five of the programs, mainly in those programs planned for adults. Eleven of the programs depend heavily on teacher-developed materials. Others use combinations of teacher-developed materials, standard text books, and other learning materials. Project Excellence is similar to the latter. The core learning guides are teacher-developed, but these often direct students to text books and other commercially produced learning materials. The uniqueness of Project Excellence, in comparison to the other programs, is the emphasis on providing alternative learning modes and media within each course.

Special teacher training. Most respondents indicated that in-service training of teachers is an important aspect of operating a successful program. Some specific attributes suggested for teachers are classified as follows. These, however, depend on the type of program offered.

- An understanding of adult education and independent learning.
- Special education certification.
- A broad teaching background.
- Counselling experience and certification.
- An elementary teaching background for dealing with students who have special needs.
- Organizational skills.

The experience of teachers in Project Excellence confirms the importance of counselling skills, a broad teaching background, understanding of independent learning, and organizational skills. Project Excellence teachers also emphasize the importance of curriculum development skills and of learning to motivate and assist students in acquiring the skills to become independent learners.

Program requirements. In response to the question as to whether the program requires a special or increased budget, 13 respondents indicated that no special or increased budget was necessary. Those answering in the affirmative indicated that additional funds were required for such things as start-up costs, purchase of Independent Learning Centre materials, extra printing costs, and some special equipment, such as video-cassette recorders and computers. This is similar to Project Excellence, where the major additional costs related to initial materials development and acquisition, and to building renovations, not to ongoing operations.

On the question of staff requirements, five respondents indicated that more teachers are required for their program than for a traditional one, two indicated that fewer teachers are required, and the remaining 13 indicated that it was the same as for the traditional program. However, 13 programs required extra support staff, such as resource personnel, secretaries, and paraprofessionals. The experience in Project Excellence has been that fewer teachers are able to deliver more courses than would be possible under a traditional system. The assistance of clerical helpers in the resource centres and secretaries in the office is essential to the success of the system.

15.1.5 Parent Involvement

Parents are usually made aware of the programs through advertising in local media, brochures, course calendars, and newsletters from the schools.

Most programs have a regular reporting system with report cards sent to homes once or twice per semester. This is supplemented with anecdotal reports and telephone calls to parents concerning student participation. Other than the very few cases where parents have participated in evaluating the program, parent involvement is minimal. None of the programs surveyed required teachers to contact parents as frequently as expected in Project Excellence.

15.1.6. Outcome

Assessment of the program. Most respondents felt that their particular program was serving a need in the community and was helpful for those students enrolled. Some noted, however, that younger adolescents did not achieve success in programs geared for adults. Table 15-4 shows an assessment of the programs' suitability for students.

Table 15-4

Suitability for Students of Independent Study Programs

SUITABILITY	NUMBER
Suitable for those who require a flexible schedule	5
Academic, independent learning - not suitable for all students	4
Geared for students who are dropouts or potential dropouts	3
Suitable for any group of students	3
Good for specific students with personal and/or social problems	2
Highlights the individual needs of students	1
Suitable for developing a skill base in Grade 9 and 10 mathematics	1
Not suitable for all students, but meets the needs of a small school	1

Strengths of the program. All respondents noted at least one strength and these are summarized in order of frequency of choice.

1. Allows for timetable flexibility.
2. Provides individualized attention with social and emotional support.
3. Is intended to meet individual student needs and career plans.
4. Allows for enhancement or enrichment of regular curriculum.

5. Challenges teachers.
6. Links academic learning to personal development.
7. Provides a service to small schools with limited availability of courses.
8. Increases the possibility for immediate feedback to students and close control of progress by the teacher.
9. Students can enter on a continuous basis for at least part of the year.
10. Gives students an opportunity to organize and plan a portion of their work.
11. Improves the quantity and quality of writing.
12. Develops and improves students' study habits.
13. Encourages team planning by the teachers.

These strengths are similar to the strengths of Project Excellence cited by teachers and administrators at E.S.C.H.S.

Weaknesses of the program. Perhaps because of their personal involvement in the programs, respondents were not always able to indicate a specific weakness. The more common weaknesses are summarized here.

1. Heavy commitment of time and energy is required of staff.
2. Time management and motivation are difficult to obtain.
3. Limited facilities make expansion difficult.
4. Heavy responsibility is placed on students to complete assignments.
5. A great deal of time is spent marking assignments and tests to keep up with individualized programming.
6. Some students, especially the younger ones, have difficulty recognizing the tasks to be done when working independently.
7. The program is offered at a high cost to the school system.
8. There is a high turnover rate among adult students.
9. Too much reliance on Independent Learning Centre materials tends to limit the creativity of the teachers.
10. It is not always possible to acquire appropriate staff for the program.

With the exception of high costs to the school system and the turnover rate among adult students, these difficulties are similar to difficulties described for Project Excellence. The comment about the disincentive to teacher creativity arising from reliance on the ILC materials is noteworthy. The efficiency of using ready-made materials may well be offset by the benefits of teacher commitment that arise in the process of curriculum development.

Continuation of the program. All respondents indicated a desire to have the program continue under much the same format as at present. Seven indicated that they would like to see their program expand for the following year.

15.1.7. Summary

Based on the responses from school boards, it appears that the number of secondary school students presently involved in individualized programs within the regular school setting is minimal. Most of the directors of education responding to our survey, however, indicated an interest in considering a program or parts of a program like Project Excellence in the future.

Also, based on the interview responses of the two small secondary schools, the need to look for programming alternatives becomes more pressing when the school cannot offer a full program of courses.

Most respondents agree that not all students function well in an individualized, independent learning environment. However, most of the teachers responding emphasized the merits of giving students increased responsibility for their own progress with maximum support and encouragement from their teachers.

The data from other schools suggest that individualized, independent study programs appear to be best suited to mature, highly-motivated students whose goals are clearly defined. This finding is corroborated in part in Project Excellence. It is important to note, however, that almost all the programs reported from other schools were limited in their scope to certain categories of students, often to those perceived as more academically successful. Thus, the judgement that programs in those schools work best for mature, highly-motivated students may reflect the entry characteristics of students allowed into these programs, more than observed student outcomes, as in Project Excellence.

It is also important to note that Project Excellence is evolving in the direction of finding ways to adapt the program to make it work better for those students who have difficulty adjusting to the system. In other words, the emphasis in Project Excellence has been to adapt the program to fit the students, rather than to delimit access to the program to those it already "fits". Finally, the criticism that independent study programs like Project Excellence do not work equally well for all students applies to conventionally organized secondary schools, as well.

A further finding is that independent study programs appear to be more successful in settings separate from the regular day school, where student-teacher conferencing becomes an important element in the instructional process. That is, the programs thrive better in an environment where they do not compete for teacher time and resources with a regular program. Teachers involved part-time in these programs in regular schools have difficulty devoting time to consultation with students. The Project Excellence experience provides strong confirmation of the importance of regular teacher-student conferencing about academic progress in this type of system.

The majority of respondents indicate that organizing for individualized instruction is very time-consuming and requires a high commitment of energy on the part of staff. This supports our findings for Project Excellence, particularly during the development phase and first couple of years of implementation. The major issue for teachers initially is simply getting curriculum developed and through an initial cycle of revision and refinement.

Unlike Project Excellence, students in most of the programs surveyed are exposed essentially to one kind of instruction, rather than a variety of methods, with time being the major variable. We did not encounter any programs with an equivalent emphasis on providing alternative learning modes within the individualized program. Rather, the individualized learning program itself was typically regarded as one alternative to a conventional program.

15.2. SUMMARY OF CONTACTS WITH VISITORS TO PROJECT EXCELLENCE

In order to further determine the degree of interest in developing individualized instruction programs, a check was made of the visitors to École Secondaire Cochrane High School by representatives of other school districts. This produced a list of representatives from ten boards of education that had visited the school on one or more occasion.

Telephone interviews were then conducted with officials and/or principals of these boards to determine whether or not any follow-up action had taken place or was planned. Four boards replied that action had either taken place or was planned. The following summarizes their responses.

Board A.

An initial study was undertaken to implement an individualized program in a small high school in a rural part of the board's jurisdiction. The school had a population of only 450 students and had difficulty in offering a broad range of courses, particularly at the senior level. After considerable study it was decided not to proceed because it was recognized that such a program would not suit all students. Some students would be forced to attend another school a long distance from their homes. This was not acceptable to the school board, community, or teaching staff.

The idea, however, was not abandoned. A new school is being opened by the board in an urban area where access to other secondary schools is more readily available. A modified form of the Cochrane plan is being considered for that school.

Board B.

Representatives of Board B, trustees, officials, teachers, made at least three visits to Cochrane to learn about the program. There was initial enthusiasm for the idea and studies were undertaken to start such a program in a local high school. Local interest, both pro and con, developed. The matter became an issue before adequate planning had taken place. The school staff was asked to indicated its support for the idea. The staff voted against the proposal and the whole idea was dropped.

Board C.

This board operates a very small secondary school (150 students) which serves two small adjacent communities. Students wishing courses not available are transported to a large high school ten miles away.

The principal felt that if his school were organized on the Cochrane model, he would be able to offer more courses and thereby retain more students. He initiated a staff study of the Cochrane plan and established a number of staff committees. All staff visited Cochrane during 1987-1988.

After further review of the accommodation situation, the board decided to amalgamate the small school with the larger high school and the proposal died.

Board D.

Board D is a large city board. One of the principals has expressed an interest in developing an "individualized and self-pacing" program. She has been encouraged by the board and considerable interest has been evinced by staff. Visits have been made to Cochrane and to Bishop Carroll High School in Calgary, and discussions have taken place with various interested authorities. It is agreed that the program will be implemented in 1990. To date, two phases of the planning have been completed.

Phase 1, which involved seven committees with representatives from all groups and levels of staff, researched the concepts and made recommendations.

Phase 2 has seen the development of six subcommittees and a co-ordinating committee. The following areas have been examined and planned by these groups: Administration (including operations and organization), Curriculum, Physical Plant, Student Needs, Staff Needs, and Communication and Motivation. These plans include short-term goals for '88-'89 as well as long-term goals for the next 3 to 5 years.

The work continues with a concentration on plans for implementation and staff in-service training. It is anticipated the program will begin in 1990.

15.3. SCHOOLS WITH MORE THAN 500 STUDENTS

While we did not locate a school of more than 500 students in Ontario offering a school-wide independent learning program, we have no hesitation in stating that large numbers should not prove to be an insurmountable hurdle in designing, implementing, and carrying out such a program. The numbers will, doubtless, present some new and different challenges. It is noteworthy that one of the schools planning to implement a system similar to Project Excellence (school D in the preceding section) has a current enrolment of more than 1000 students.

One of the major motivating factors for the establishment of the system in Cochrane was declining enrolment, and the consequent effects on the school's ability to offer a wide range of programs. That problem would not likely apply in a larger school. Other factors which present problems in Cochrane would probably be less significant if a larger pool of students and teachers were available.

While declining enrolment and course maintenance are one justification for adopting this system, we believe the student outcome findings presented in chapters 11 through 13 provide a strong rationale for adopting this system independent of administrative efficiency.

Assuming that the identified concerns about the rate of student credit completion are temporary and resolvable, the benefits for students in terms of more individualized attention, higher achievement, self-esteem, and the development of individual responsibility, organizational skills, and resourcefulness in learning would be sufficient justification for adopting the system.

Some of the advantages for an independent learning program in a larger school would appear to be:

(1) a larger pool of teachers to share the onerous task of developing curriculum and tests;

(2) fewer departments consisting of one teacher, thereby diminishing the load involved in serving as a subject teacher, TA, and maintaining a resource centre;

(3) a greater opportunity for teachers to specialize in their subject areas;

(4) a diminished marking load because of the larger number of teachers and the likelihood that individual teachers would cover a narrower range of subjects;

(5) a better opportunity for specialist teachers to get to know the students in their programs.

On the other hand, a larger pool of students would:

(1) create a much more difficult problem in controlling students in the halls;

(2) create a more difficult situation in the integration of Grade 9 students into the system;

(3) present a greater problem of students getting "lost" among the large numbers involved.

(4) increase the paper flow and require better and more sophisticated ways of tracking student progress;

(5) require more support staff (clerical, secretarial);

(6) require improved office equipment (more and compatible duplicating equipment, computer programs, etc.)

15.4. FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED IN INTRODUCING AN INDEPENDENT LEARNING SYSTEM

This chapter concludes with a series of recommendations and considerations for replication of a school-wide independent learning system like Project Excellence. We begin with recommendations to other schools from officials and staff at E.S.C.H.S. Then we offer our own analysis of factors to be considered in introducing such a system.

15.4.1. Recommendations from E.S.C.H.S. Concerning the Replication of Project Excellence

In our interviews with school administrators, department heads, teachers, and parents, we asked the respondents' advice for other schools considering or planning to adopt this system of education.

A minority of those interviewed said they thought more in-depth needs assessment was advisable before deciding to implement a system like Project Excellence. They recommended that other schools should spend more than just three or four days in a model school before deciding on implementation.

The large majority of those interviewed agreed that the initiation stage for Project Excellence at E.S.C.H.S. was too short. Most recommended a year or eighteen months preparation time, in order to get units fully prepared and for training and practice in the teacher advisor role. There was also general acknowledgement that more preparation should have been given to students and that parents should have been more involved and better informed in the adoption decision and initiation process.

School officials and teachers unanimously agreed that in order to implement a change of this magnitude, the full commitment of the central office, the school administration, teachers, and trustees is needed. Provisions for transferring teachers who do not choose to participate, and for hiring teachers that do, are necessary. When hiring teachers to work in this type of system, their flexibility in terms of teaching in more than one subject area is a key consideration.

Access to initial and follow-up contact with experienced teachers and administrators from model schools is essential during the initiation and early phase of implementation.

Finally, a majority of those interviewed, especially parents and students, state that school systems adopting the Project Excellence model should provide students and parents with a choice of schools from the beginning.

15.4.2. Recommendations from Edu-Con Concerning the Replication of Project Excellence

We concur with the recommendations from E.S.C.H.S. to other boards and schools. In our opinion, the support system used to facilitate implementation of Project Excellence from September 1985 onward has been exemplary in many ways. In the short space of three years, the school has undergone a complete metamorphosis. Implementation of Project Excellence has become routine for teachers and students to the point where this system of education has become the normal *modus operandi* for the school.

We do believe, however, that a plan for evaluating the impact of the Project as a whole on student performance and progress could have been instituted as part of the initiation process, rather than three years down the line. We are also of the opinion that the initiation timeline at E.S.C.H.S. was too short. In particular, the overall lack of readiness of curriculum was detrimental to student adjustment and progress the first year.

The basic factors in introducing an independent learning system are not any different from those required in the introduction of any new, large-scale program. There are, however, factors that are unique to an independent learning program that require careful long-term planning and consideration. The following are factors we consider essential in introducing such a program.

Commitment to the concept. A program organized on the Project Excellence model requires a major change in the basic role of teachers, the responsibility carried by the student, the day-to-day functioning of both, the roles of the administrative team and the department heads. Such a major alteration of traditional, accepted practice requires a strong commitment to the idea by *all* concerned.

Understanding of the various roles and expectations. The changes in roles and functions require a deep understanding of the basic goals of the system and the effects such changes have on all concerned. To achieve such understanding, careful, detailed in-service and collegial sharing is necessary for the staff both prior to and during the early implementation of the system. It may not be possible for teachers to fully understand some dimensions of the new roles, such as the teacher advisor role, until they actually begin carrying out the functions associated with the role. Opportunities to discuss and clarify the new roles with peers during implementation is important to the success of this change. Access to help from schools which are successfully implementing the system is also essential during the development and early stages of implementation.

Time and planning. So many changes are required, and so much careful planning is necessary, that long-term planning and preparation is essential during the development stage. It is our opinion that a minimum of two years is necessary to do the curriculum work, i.e., to develop units and tests and support material; and to educate the community and the student body as to the reasons for introducing the system, the goals, the expectations, and the expected outcomes.

Because the implementation of this system will vary in its myriad details from one school context to another, it is equally imperative for school officials to employ short-term strategic planning throughout the development and early implementation process. A "vision" will have to be developed and adapted for each setting, but the details of that vision will have to be forged largely in the process of development and implementation, not before. Short-term planning mechanisms are needed to deal with the unexpected contingencies and decisions that arise.

Leadership. The extent of the success of the new system will depend in very great measure on the commitment, strength, and sensitivity of the leadership provided by the principal and his/her leadership team.

Community support. The system should not proceed unless there is a large degree of support for it in the community. That support can only be obtained by convincing the community that the advantages of the system will outweigh the disadvantages.

Alternatives. Cochrane's experience has clearly indicated the need for providing alternative educational opportunities for students who are unable or unwilling to participate in the system. On the other hand, students who normally would attend other schools and who might benefit from taking part in the independent learning system should have an opportunity to do so. In other words, there should be opportunities to drop out and to drop in.

Costs. It is not possible for us to estimate the costs of implementing such a system, since that will depend on school size, facilities, location, and local decisions regarding such things as curriculum (purchase ready-made materials versus teacher-developed materials). It is obvious, however, that funds are required for initial and ongoing curriculum development, additional equipment for the school offices, building alterations, additional support personnel, and certain other items. Transfer arrangements with other schools might, as in Cochrane, require additional transportation costs.

In Cochrane, the availability of special funds (e.g., Northern Development grants) and creative budgeting on the part of the administration (e.g., use supply teacher money to pay resource centre assistants) has minimized the added costs. The extra costs are mostly incurred in the start-up phase of project implementation. Once a system like Project Excellence is in place, there is no evidence to suggest that it costs more to maintain than a conventional secondary school.

Assembly of student progress data. In order that student progress in the new system can be evaluated, it is important that careful records of student achievement in the "old" system be assembled and maintained for comparative purposes. This should be done prior to the introduction of the program.

Assessment. A plan for evaluating the success of the new independent study system should be agreed upon before implementation gets underway. The Ministry of Education should offer assistance to school boards in designing and carrying out these evaluations.

With the foregoing considerations in mind we offer the following recommendations to the Ministry of Education concerning the "minimum requirements" for a school planning to introduce a system of education like Project Excellence.

(57) *Recommendation:* We recommend that the Ministry of Education establish basic requirements for any school planning to introduce a system of education similar to Project Excellence, including:

(a) a timetabled plan for project development and introduction of no less than two years;

(b) evidence that all units for courses to be offered are developed prior to opening the project to students, with a plan for revision based on initial results and student feedback;

(c) in-service for teachers, school administrators, and support staff, including visits to model schools;

(d) proven community support;

(e) a plan for communicating with parents throughout the initiation phase of project development and subsequent implementation;

(f) a plan for monitoring and evaluating the overall impact of the project on student progress and performance;

(g) clarification and agreement on the role of teacher advisors versus guidance counselors;

(h) policies to prevent students from proceeding on new courses if they are not meeting expectations for unit completion in other courses;

(i) provisions for students not wishing to attend or unable to achieve in the system to transfer to another school within a reasonable distance; and

(j) provisions for teachers not wishing to teach in the system to transfer to other schools in the jurisdiction.

(58) *Recommendation.* In view of the apparent interest in independent learning systems like Project Excellence indicated by responses from our questionnaire to directors of education, we recommend that the Ministry of Education consider holding provincial or regional workshops to provide more information on this topic to trustees, administrators, teachers, and the general public.

(59) *Recommendation.* In light of widespread interest throughout the province in this system, and evidence that several boards are already proceeding towards implementation in selected schools, we recommend that the Ministry of Education consider seconding someone experienced with this system from E.S.C.H.S. to provide consultative assistance to those schools.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Berman, P. "Toward an Implementation Paradigm". In Improving Schools, edited by Rolf Lehming and Michael Kane. Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1981.

Bloom, B. "A Response to Slavin's Mastery Learning Reconsidered". Review of Educational Research, vol. 57, No. 4 (1987), pp. 507-508.

Fullan, M. The Meaning of Educational Change. Toronto: OISE Press, 1982.

Gilbert, K. Year One of a Three-Year Evaluation Study of University Hill Secondary School. Research Report 72-17. Vancouver: Department of Planning and Evaluation, Board of School Trustees, 1972.

Hall, G. "The Concerns-Based Perspective on Personnel Preparation, Program Development and Dissemination". Teacher Education and Special Education, 4 (Spring 1981), pp. 51-60.

Hall, G., and Hord, S. Change in Schools: Facilitating the Process. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1987.

Hall, G., and Hord, S. "A Framework for Analyzing What Change Facilitators Do: the Intervention Taxonomy". Knowledge: Creation, Diffusion, Utilization, 5 (March 1984), pp. 275-307.

Hall, G., George, A., and Rutherford, W. Measuring Stages of Concern about the Innovation: A Manual for the Use of the SoC Questionnaire. Report No. 3139. Austin, Texas: The University of Texas Research and Development Center for Teacher Education, 1979.

Hall, G., Loucks, S., Rutherford, W., and Newlove, B. "Levels of Use of the Innovation: A Framework for Analyzing Innovation Adoption". Journal of Teacher Education, vol. 29, No. 1 (1975), pp. 52-56.

Heck, S., Stiegelbauer, S., Hall, G., and Loucks, S. Measuring Innovation Configurations: Procedures and Applications. Report No. 3108. Austin, Texas: The University of Texas Research and Development Center in Teacher Education, 1981.

Huberman, M., and Miles, M. Innovation Up Close. New York: Plenum Press, 1984.

Lawton, S., and Leithwood, K., Batcher, E., Donaldson, E., Stewart, R. Student Retention and Transition in Ontario High Schools: Policies, Practices, and Prospects. Toronto: Ministry of Education, Ontario, 1988.

Newlove, B., and Hall, G. A Manual for Assessing Open-ended Statements of Concern about an Innovation. Report No. 3029. Austin, Texas: The University of Texas Research and Development Center in Teacher Education, 1976.

Ontario. Ministry of Education. Education Statistics. Toronto: Ministry of Education, Ontario, 1986.

Ontario. Ministry of Education. Ontario Schools, Intermediate and Senior Divisions (Grades 7-12/OACs): Program and Diploma Requirements. Toronto: Ministry of Education, Ontario, 1984.

Ontario Secondary School Principals' Council. Memo to OSSPC Principals re "Spring 1988 Survey".

Radwanski, G. Ontario Study of the Relevance of Education, and the Issue of Dropouts. Toronto: Ministry of Education, Ontario, 1987.

Virgin, A., and Shecter, H. Report on an Evaluation of the North York Alternate and Independent Study Program. North York: Educational Research Services, Board of Education for the Borough of North York, 1973.

APPENDIX A

Request for Research Proposal: Project Excellence

INDEX TO REPORT

This research will be a case study of:

- the effectiveness of Project Excellence on student learning with	
- respect to the thirteen goals of education in Ontario	Chapt. 13
- the initiation, development, implementation, and institutionalization of Project Excellence	Chapt. 1, 4

I. Overview

Project Excellence is an innovative approach to individualizing instruction for students at École Secondaire Cochrane High School. It is also designed to provide a breadth of program with limited staff. This case study is intended to describe the project in terms of:

- goals, objectives, and principles	Chapt. 3
- preparation and in-service of staff	Chapt. 4, 15
- resources needed	Chapt. 4, 15
- student achievement, growth, and development	Chapt. 11, 12
- the social milieu in the school	Chapt. 1, 12, 14
- roles and responsibilities of teachers, students, and administration	Chapt. 3, 5, 6, 7
- role of teacher advisors	Chapt. 3, 5
- organization of the teachers' work day	Chapt. 3, 5
- community relationships	Chapt. 1, 4, 5, 8
- the change process relative to four major phases: initiation, development, implementation, and institutionalization.	Chapt. 4

This research is also to fully describe the four major phases of the change process in order that the project's positive aspects might be transferable to other secondary schools in the province.	Chapt. 4
Certain concepts inherent in Project Excellence are found individually in other schools in Ontario. This study will examine some of these for purposes of comparison and for recommending possible further implementation of the principles in Project Excellence.	Chapt. 15
The research is to provide feedback to the ministry and the Cochrane Iroquois Falls-Black River Matheson Board of Education relative to the strengths and weaknesses of Project Excellence.	See recommendations throughout the report

II. The Context

Project Excellence is modelled after a similar program at Bishop Carroll High School in Calgary.

The main features of Project Excellence are:

- individualized programs of instruction
- students determine their own timetables on a day-to-day basis and their own rates of progress
- classrooms are organized as learning centres
- teachers act as advisors, tutors, coaches, and evaluators
- teacher aides (paid) assist with the learning centre administration, tracking, testing, etc.
- oral-French monitors work with the students
- co-op education is offered and shop courses are available
- physical education and music are the only "scheduled" classes
- instruction is offered in both languages

- twenty units of six hours each comprise a course, and testing follows completion of units and courses
- the units are presented to students in mimeograph form
- student work done in the resource/media centre supports many of the units
- teachers are heavily involved in developing and revising courses (based on provincial guidelines)
- the school has an enrolment of 500
- a French-language separate school (secondary) is located within the building.

III. Main Areas of Focus for this Study

1.	What unique benefits accrue to the students?	Chapt. 7, 10, 11, 12, 13
2.	Would this model only benefit a small school?	Chapt. 15
3.	Is it transferable to other schools?	Chapt. 15
4.	What processes during initiation, development, implementation, and institutionalization stages are necessary to replicate for successful transfer to other schools?	Chapt. 4, 15
5.	What difficulties do students have who do not wish to attend this school? Where do they go and how many?	Chapt. 3, 11

IV. Specific Questions

This case study will answer the following questions:

1.	What are the unique features characterizing Project Excellence?	Chapt. 3
2.	Does the project promote the principles set out in OSIS? How does it do this?	Chapt. 10, 13
3.	What are the principles, goals, and objectives of the project.	Chapt. 3

4.	What are the specific roles of teachers, students, parents, aides, and community members?	Chapt. 3, 5, 7, 8, 9
5.	What are the attitudes of the above people toward the project?	Chapt. 12, 14
6.	What adjustments did they make during the four phases of the change process?	Chapt. 4, 5, 7, 8, 9
7.	What are their current concerns?	Chapt. 4, 14
8.	What were the main/critical processes and events during each of the four stages of the change process?	Chapt. 4
9.	How is this program articulated with the feeder schools?	Chapt. 3
10.	How are students evaluated in the areas of social, cognitive (academic), affective, and skill achievement and development?	Chapt. 10
11.	Are there obvious differences in standards and in achievement/growth between the project students and students in this school before Project Excellence?	Chapt. 11, 12
12.	How are exceptional students taught in the project?	Chapt. 3
13.	How are potential dropouts motivated and encouraged?	Chapt. 3, 4, 11
14.	How are students organized who do not learn well in this environment? Where do they go? What other schools are available? What do teachers at these other schools think of this arrangement? e.g. Timmins, Kapuskasing	Chapt. 3, 4, 11
15.	What flexibility is there in "mastery learning" and timing for units, and accounting for credits?	Chapt. 3, 7, 11
16.	How are students assigned to advisors? What relationships are established?	Chapt. 3, 5, 7, 14

17. How are teachers evaluated as (i) teacher advisor (ii) learning centre instructor	Chapt. 6
18. What professional development/in-service education was necessary for the staff to accept, adopt, and thrive in the project?	Chapt. 4
19. What professional development would be needed for staffs in other schools for successful transfer of the project?	Chapt. 4, 15
20. Generally what aspects of the project are most effective relative to its goals and objectives, and where might improvements be made?	See recommendations throughout the report
21. Is such a project suitable for a school larger than 500?	Chapt. 15

APPENDIX B

Summary of Research Components and Methods

RESEARCH COMPONENTS	FOCUS	INSTRUMENTS/ METHODS
A. DESCRIPTIVE CASE STUDY	Describes PE characteristics, change process, current status, and context	
A.1 Innovation Description	Describes behavioural components of PE and variations in use.	PE Description Teacher and Administrator Interviews
A.2 Change Process/Organization	Describes policies, plans, and supports used to facilitate initiation, implementation, and continuation of PE.	Innovation History Administrator Interview; Teacher Interview Change Process; Department Head Interview; Director, Superintendent, Board Interview; historical documents
A.3 Change Process/ Individual	Describes changes in behaviour and attitudes of school administrators, teachers, students, and parents in PE.	Teacher Interview Change Process; Principal/VP Role Interview; Department Head Interview; Student Interview; Parent Interview.
A.4 Current Implementation Status	Examines current teacher, student, and parent behaviours in PE.	Stages of Concern Questionnaire; Level of Use Interview; PE Checklist and Interview; Student Questionnaire and Interview; Parent Questionnaire and Interview; Observation
A.5 School and Community Context	Background data on school system and community.	Documents

B. CASE STUDY EVALUATION	Evaluates characteristics of PE, its implementation and impact.	
B.1 Goals of Education and OSIS	Evaluates curriculum materials, PE descriptions, and findings in terms of OSIS and the goals of education of Ontario.	Course analysis; PE document analysis; Research team discussion
B.2 Expected Implementation	Evaluates degree to which teachers, students and parents are implementing PE as expected.	PE Checklist; Teacher Status of Implementation Interview; Student Questionnaire; Observation; Parent Questionnaire
B.3 Participant Attitudes	Examines current attitudes and opinions about PE of school administrators, teachers, students, and parents.	Principal/VP Role Interview; Teacher Status of Implementation Interview; Teacher Project Impact Interview; Department Head Interview; Director, Superintendent, Board Interview; Student Questionnaire and Interview; Parent Questionnaire and Interview
B. Implementation Support System	Judges effectiveness of process used to support implementation in terms of current status and change theory.	See A.2 and A.4 above
B.5 Student Outcomes	Evaluates nature, degree, and scope of PE impact on students.	
(a) Course maintenance	Examines frequency and reasons for course deletions under PE.	Document analysis; Department head interviews (informal)
(b) Course completion	Evaluates rate of credit accumulation by students before/after PE.	Student records analysis

(c) Marks	Evaluates student marks after 2 years of PE to 1983-85 student marks at ESCHS.	Student records analysis
(d) Teacher and student views	Reports teacher and student perceptions of PE impact on cognitive, affective, and social outcomes.	Teacher Project Impact Interview; Student Interview and Questionnaire
(e) Dropout rates	Evaluates dropout rates before/after PE in comparison to provincial norms.	Student records analysis
(f) Transfer students	Examines frequency, reasons, and adjustment of students who transfer out of PE to other schools.	Transfer Student Interview; Transfer School Principal Interview
C. DIFFUSION FEASIBILITY STUDY	Assess potential replicability of PE in other secondary schools	
C.1 Similar Programs Survey	Reports the incidence and characteristics of schools with programs similar to PE in Ontario.	Questionnaire to Directors of Education; Questionnaire for Schools Reporting Independent Learning Programs
C.2 Interested Schools Survey	Reports outcomes of visits to PE by school personnel from other Ontario school boards.	Telephone interviews

APPENDIX C

Data Gathering Instruments and Sample Size

DATA GATHERING INSTRUMENTS	SAMPLE SIZE
1. Project Excellence Description: Teacher Interview Description de Projet Excellence : entrevue avec les enseignants	17
2. Project Excellence Description: Administrator Interview Description de Projet Excellence : entrevue avec les administrateurs	3
3. Innovation History: Administrator Interview	2
4. Principal/Vice-principal Role and Role Change Interview Entrevue avec le directeur et les directeurs adjoints sur leur rôle et sur les changements survenus dans leur rôle	3
5. Stages of Concern Questionnaire Questionnaire sur les préoccupations des enseignants(es)	36
6. Status of Implementation Interview Entrevue avec les enseignants sur le stage de la mise en oeuvre	32
7. Teacher Interview: Change Process Entrevue avec les enseignants	15
8. Teacher Interview: Perceptions of Project Impact Entrevue avec les enseignants (perceptions de l'impact du projet)	33

DATA GATHERING INSTRUMENTS	SAMPLE SIZE
9. Department Head Role, Role Change and Opinions Interview Entrevue avec les chefs de section (changements dans leur rôle; opinions sur Projet Excellence)	7
10. Director, Superintendent, Board Role Interviews	4
11. Student Interview Entrevue avec les étudiants	39
12. Student Role and Opinions Questionnaire Questionnaire des étudiants (rôles et opinions)	293
13. Transfer Student Interview Entrevue avec les étudiants qui ont quitté le Projet Excellence pour une autre école	20
14. Interview Guide: Transfer School Principals	2
15. Parent Role and Opinions Questionnaire Questionnaire des parents (rôle et opinions)	184
16. Parent Interview Guide Guide d'entrevue pour les parents	15
17. Interview with Feeder School Principals	3
18. Number of courses selected for curriculum analysis	24
19. Questionnaire to Directors of Education re Individualized Instruction Programs	69
20. Questionnaire for Schools Reporting Independent Learning Programs	25

APPENDIX D
Project Excellence Checklist[1]

1. ATTENDANCE AND SPOT CHECKS: TA checks attendance three times a day

1.* Plus conducts spot checks on all students. Frequency of spot checks may vary, but on some regular basis.	2. Plus conducts spot checks on some students on as needed basis.	3. Does not conduct spot checks.

2. SCHEDULED INTERVIEWS: TA holds regularly scheduled interviews

1.* With all students within each two week period to monitor unit completion, plan for further units, and diagnose problems, in addition to report card interviews. They also hold on the spot or as needed interviews.	2. With all students at different intervals within a one month period. They also hold on the spot or as needed interviews.	3. With some students. They also meet with all students at (two month) report card period.	4. TA schedules student interviews only when the need arises. OR TA holds on the spot interviews with students as needed, in addition to report card interviews.	5. TA meets with students only at report card period (two month period).	6. Other: Teacher has a regular weekly/ biweekly interview with students but whenever she can work it in.

---

[1] Variations marked "Other" describe idiosyncratic behaviours. Items marked with an asterisk (*) represent ideal behaviours of teachers in this system.

3. TIMETABLING STUDENT COURSES

1.* TA gives students opportunity to develop and complete own timetable, but steps in and develops/monitors timetable if students are new to the program or are unable or unwilling to do it.	2. Students develop and complete timetable for own courses with advice of TA.	3. TA develops timetable for students and monitors student completion of it.	4. Other: Does not help students with timetable

4. COUNSELING STUDENTS IN PLANNING OR REVISING COURSE SELECTION

1.* TA counsels and provides guidance to students in planning or revising course selection and timetabling. TA involves guidance department as needed. (Teachers first talk to student then go to guidance themselves for information needed, go with student or send the information as a part of counseling.)	2. TA refers student to guidance department for counseling or information. Does not counsel student.	3. Students go to guidance department on their own for information, TA is not involved. They may bring information to meeting with TA.	4. Other: Does not counsel students about courses due to special circumstances. (Section 16)

5. MONITORING STUDENT PROGRESS: FREQUENCY OF REVIEW

1. TA monitors green slip production and prepares biweekly summary of unit completion progress for all students. No description is given of other checks.	2. TA monitors green slip production and prepares biweekly summary of unit completion progress for all students. Plus daily check of unit progress with all students (verbal or otherwise).	3. TA monitors green slip production and prepares biweekly summary of unit completion progress for all students. Plus weekly check or review of student unit progress and completion.	4. TA monitors green slip production and prepares biweekly summary of unit completion progress for all students. Plus monthly check or review of student unit progress and completion.

6. MONITORING STUDENT PROGRESS: CHARTING PROGRESS

1.* TA reviews green slips and keeps private record (open to students) of unit completion progress for individual students. Students are not required to keep own records.

2. TA keeps personal record and provides opportunity for students to keep own personal records.

3. TA keeps personal record and public record (charts, printouts, etc.). Students not required to keep own records but may do so.

4. TA keeps personal record. Students maintain public and private records of progress.

7. PRESCRIBING CONTROLS FOR STUDENT PERFORMANCE: Based on diagnosis of student need:

1.* TA negotiates controls with student

2. TA prescribes (sets) controls for student performance using a variety of options based on problem and duration.

3. Other: Controls are built into program (Section 16); Teacher talks to them but doesn't really utilize controls

8. PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN PRESCRIBING CONTROLS

1.* Parents are informed but not consulted by the TA in prescribing controls, except in cases of stronger controls or by parent request.

2. Parents are consulted and involved by the TA in prescribing controls in most cases.

3. Parents are consulted and involved by the TA in prescribing controls only in extreme cases.

4. Parents are neither informed or consulted by the TA in prescribing controls.

5. Other: For some students, parents are informed, for others they are not.

9. VARIETY OF CONTROLS USED BY TAGS (See List)

1. TA uses full spectrum of control options as suggested by identified needs of individual students.

2. TA uses a variety of control options as suggested by identified needs of individual students. Selection of some controls is limited by organizational constraints or personal preference.

3. TA uses a small number of control options based on personal preference.

List: 1. firm warning; 2. meeting with subject teacher; 3. short term unit goals; 4. verbal or written contract; 5. daily progress reports; 6. written timetable; 7. spot checks; 8. work in TA's centre; 9. one to one supervision; 10. ask parents for help; 11. refer to room 210; 12. refer to VP or guidance.

10. QUICKNESS OF CONTROLS

1. TA waits a few days to see if problem is resolved before imposing controls. They may immediately discuss problem with student but will wait for next scheduled interview or set a later interview to prescribe controls if still needed.	2. TA prescribes controls immediately once academic problem is identified.	3. TA waits for scheduled interview to discuss needs for controls with student.	4. TA waits for report card interview to discuss need for controls with student.

11. INVOLVEMENT OF OTHER STAFF IN DIAGNOSING AND PRESCRIBING AIDS TO STUDENT PERFORMANCE.

1.* TA regularly seeks out and consults with other staff to diagnose and solve problems for students whenever a problem (academic, unit production, personal) is identified. This is in addition to discussion of student progress at the biweekly meetings with VP/TA group.	2. TA seeks out and consults with other staff to diagnose and solve problems for students only when they are unable to solve it themselves. This is in addition to discussion of student progress at the biweekly meetings with VP/TA group.	3. TA talks to other staff about student needs primarily at the biweekly TA/VP meetings.	4. Other: Consulted another TA once, felt it was not successful and did not continue; talks mostly to principal and vice-principals because of special group; talks to VP about special problems; rarely talks to others.

12.*REGULAR COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

1.* TA contacts all parents primarily by phone a minimum of once a month to advise of student progress. They may also contact in writing and arrange a personal visit if necessary. Parent also call TAs as needed.	2. TA attempts to phone all parents once a reporting period, unless a parent declines. Parents also call TAs as needed.	3. TA contacts all parents primarily in writing a minimum of once a month to advise of student progress. They may also phone occasionally.	4. TA negotiates with parents about frequency and form of contact. Parents are contacted in some form at least once a reporting period.	5. Other: No regular calls to parents, except when students do well. Parents may call TA if they have a question (special circumstances).

13. TA GROUP ACTIVITIES

1.* TA frequently tries to involve TA group in whole group activities related to team building and/or academic performance and encourages group to get involved in large group activities (student council activities, etc.)	2. TA occasionally tries to involve TA group in whole group activities related to team building and/or academic performance and encourages group to get involved in large group school sponsored activities.	3. TA does not involve TA group in whole group activities though TA encourages students to get involved in large group school sponsored activities.

TEACHER ROLE

14. TEACHER AVAILABILITY AS A RESOURCE TO STUDENTS

1.* Teacher assists students with any subject matter problem (leads or directs student to ways to find answer, finds referral for them) any time of the day. (Everybody offers as much help as they can).	2. Teacher assists students with any subject matter while in centres.	3. Teacher assists students only in area of subject expertise any time of the day.	4. Teacher assists students only in area of subject expertise only while in centre.	5. Other: Special circumstances, students rarely ask questions about other subjects.

15. INITIATION OF STUDENT/TEACHER CONTACT

1.* Teacher initiates contact primarily through notes and green slips to students, but does not circulate in centres. They also respond to student initiated contact, or TA initiated contact.

2. Teacher actively initiates contact through notes and green slips to students and by circulating and asking questions of students while in centres. Teacher also responds to student initiated contact, or TA initiated contact.

3. Other: Works in more than one centre - circulates in one, marks/stays in one place in the other and will respond to questions; Section 16, sometimes circulates, sometimes does not. Does not have to send notes or green slips.

16. SEMINAR CONTENT

1. Teacher holds no seminars.

2. Teacher uses seminars for student discussion and presentations.

3. Teacher uses seminars for teacher demonstration.

4. Teacher uses seminars for combination of direct teaching, student discussion and/or presentations.

5. Teacher uses seminars primarily for presentation of material. Teacher does not require or encourage student input. Students ask questions or listen.

6. Other: Teacher uses seminars for classroom-like work in groups, students prepare and discuss. Teacher has large group instruction two times a week for music performance.

17. SEMINAR SCHEDULING

1. Teacher schedules no seminars, but organizes on the spot individual and small group instruction as need arises.

2. Teacher plans and schedules seminars on an ongoing basis as current student needs are identified.

3. Teacher plans and schedules seminars based on evaluation or observed needs or problems of students completing units in previous year or semester.

4. Teacher plans and schedules seminars by semester or year, based on teacher desire for directed learning activities (instruction or discussion).

5. Teacher plans and schedules seminars that are a combination of current needs, previously observed needs, and teacher desire for directed learning activities (combination 2,3 & 4).

18. SEMINAR INCENTIVES

1. Seminar attendance is optional. Teacher provides no special incentives for participation in seminars.	2. Seminar attendance is optional. Teacher uses a variety of incentives to encourage student attendance (preparation for upcoming units, complete a unit, participation credits, partial credit)	3. Seminar attendance is mandatory. Teacher requires students to come or may provide incentives to come.	4. Seminar attendance is mandatory for grades 9 or 10, optional for older students.	5. Seminar attendance is mandatory for seniors, optional for juniors.

19. CURRICULUM REVISION AND DEVELOPMENT

1. Teacher is working on development or revision of curriculum right now. Teacher may be revising course units or developing new ones based on change in ministry guidelines, but is doing it currently.	2. Teacher is not currently revising or developing curriculum but has plans to do so in the immediate future.	3. Teacher is not currently revising or developing curriculum but has plans to do so on upcoming PA day or during the summer.	4. Teacher is not currently revising or developing curriculum and has no plans to do so.	5. Teacher is not currently revising or developing curriculum but has plans to do so when ministry guidelines are available.

20. USE OF TIME FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

1.* Teacher works on curriculum mainly at school on a regular basis during the time scheduled for curriculum work.	2. Teacher works on curriculum mainly at school. Curriculum work at school is done any time during the teacher workday with no set daily or weekly schedule.	3. Teacher works on curriculum at school and at home. Curriculum work at school is done at anytime during the teacher's workday with no set daily or weekly schedule.	4. Teacher works on curriculum mainly at home with no set daily or weekly schedule.	5. Other: Mainly at home during the summer.

21. VARIETY OF MEDIA INCLUDED IN CURRICULUM

1. Teacher includes a variety of media in course units, including audio-visual tapes, audio tapes, hands on work, computer software, written assignments, oral presentations, seminars. Media is selected that is appropriate for subject.	2. Teacher includes two or three different media in course units.	3. Teacher presents course units in primarily one or two modes (mostly written).	4. Other: Wide range of options particular to music; practical work and audio-visual aids.

22. TYPES OF TESTS

1. Tests include both written and oral elements. Grading is based on both.	2. Tests are primarily written.	3. Test are primarily oral and practical.	4. Tests are primarily practical.	5. Tests are written and practical.	6. Tests are written, oral and practical.	7. No formal test. Students may have oral review.

23. GRADING PRACTICES

1. Teachers calculate grades on the basis of the highest mark a student receives or may average grades or include other factors depending on their assessment of the situation. Students may redo work as necessary.	2. Teacher calculates grades on the basis of the highest mark a student receives. Students may redo work as necessary.	3. Teacher calculates grades on the basis of an average or weighted average of marks a student receives. Students may redo work as necessary.	4. Teacher calculates grades on the basis of the highest or an average of marks a student receives. Students are limited to two tests or trials.	5. Teacher calculates grades on the basis of a single test taken by students.	6. Other: Will have students redo test but they lose points for doing so. Not an average; Grades based on oral discussion; Redo up to three times, teacher takes average; Doesn't apply to subject.

24. MARKING AND RECORDING

1. Teachers mark assignments and tests from courses they have written and record own grades.

2. Teachers mark assignments and tests from courses they have written. The RCA or others record grades.

3. Teachers mark own and others' units. They record marks.

4. Teacher marks own and other's units. RCA records.

5. Teachers mark own courses in more than one subject. They or RCA record, given subject centre.

6. Other: Another teacher marks some courses. She or he records all marks.

25. MARKING WORK LOAD

1. Teacher does marking mainly at school during office hours scheduled for curriculum development and TA work.

2. Teacher does marking mainly at school whenever time permits.

3. Teacher does marking at school and at home whenever time permits.

4. Teacher does marking mainly at home.

26. QUICKNESS OF MARKING

1.* Teacher returns marks/green slips to student the day after assignments are completed. Teacher works extra hours to complete marks if necessary.

2. Teacher returns marks/green slips to student as soon as possible. Teacher keeps time (next day, end of week) goals but does not work overtime to keep them.

3. Teacher returns marks/green slips to student when finished grading. Teacher does not maintain time goals for marking.

APPENDIX E

Profile of Component Variations in Use

	VARIATIONS							
COMPONENTS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
1.* TA checks attendance 3 times a day, plus spot checks.	15	6	8	1				2
2.* TA holds scheduled interviews in 2-week periods	15	7	2	6		1		1
3.* Students develop timetable with TA help.	14	12	3	1				2
4.* TA counsels and provides guidance in course selection.	24	3		3				2
5. TA checks unit production frequently.	4	5	9	10	2			2
6.* TA keeps record of student progress.	11	12	7	1				1
7.* TA negotiates controls with student.	16	4	7	2				3
8.* TA informs parents in prescribing controls.	6	19	4	1	1			1
9. TA uses a variety of controls.	9	13	8					2
10. TA sets controls within a reasonable time frame.	24	2	1					5
11.* TA consults with staff to solve problems.	13	10	5	3				1
12.* TA contacts parents by phone once a month.	21	3	1	4	1			2
13.* TA involves students in group activities.	3	10	6					13

(*) Represents component with ideal variation (Var.1)
Numbers represent staff out of a possible 32; NA = no answer

	VARIATIONS							
COMPONENTS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
14.* Teachers assist students in any subject when available.	23	3	1		3			2
15.* Teacher responds to student need for contact.	8	20	3					1
16. Types of seminars held by teachers.	3	3	9	7	6	2		2
17. Teachers' basis for scheduling seminars.	9	3	1	10	7			2
18. Seminar incentives.	4	4	16					8
19. Teacher is currently working on curriculum.	24	3	2	1	1			1
20.* Teacher use of time for curriculum work.	6	8	9	7	1			1
21. Teacher includes a variety of media in curriculum.	13	11	3	2				3
22. Types of unit tests used by teachers.	8	9	1	4	4	3	2	1
23. Grading practices.	6	10	4	5	4			3
24. Marking and recording grades.	12	10	1	5	2	1		1
25. Marking schedule.	3	12	11	5				1
26.* Teacher quickness of marking and return.	16	11	2					3

APPENDIX F

Statistical Profile of Respondents to Student Questionnaire and Interviews

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE (n - 293)

	Value	Frequency	Per Cent
YEARS IN HIGH SCHOOL	1	64	21.8%
	2	71	24.2%
	3	59	20.1%
	4	63	21.5%
	5	29	9.9%
	6	5	1.7%
	No Response	2	.7%
		293	100.0%

	Value	Frequency	Per Cent
YEARS AT E.S.C.H.S.	1	82	28.0%
	2	65	22.2%
	3	57	19.5%
	4	58	19.8%
	5	25	8.5%
	6	3	1.0%
	No Response	3	1.0%
		293	100.0%

	Value	Frequency	Per Cent
SEX	Male	142	8.5%
	Female	147	50.2%
	No Response	4	1.4%
		293	100.0%

LANGUAGE AND PROGRAM	Frequency	Per Cent
English student taking courses in English	155	52.9%
English student in a French Immersion program	35	11.9%
French or French/English student taking mainly courses in English	65	22.2%
French or French/English student taking mainly courses in French	26	8.9%
No response	12	4.1%
	293	100.0%

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY ENGLISH/FRANCAIS & MATH

	Frequency	Per Cent
English/francais		
Advanced	144	49.1%
General	115	39.2%
Basic	28	9.6%
No response	6	2.0%
	293	100.0%
Mathematics/mathématiques		
Advanced	127	43.3%
General	112	38.2%
Basic	41	14.0%
No response	13	4.4%
	293	100.0%

POSTSECONDARY SCHOOL PLANS

	Frequency	Per Cent
Go to work	55	18.8%
Stay home	1	.3%
Go to university	104	35.6%
Go to college	90	30.7%
Don't know	30	10.2%
Other	6	2.0%
No response	7	2.4%
	293	100.0%

STUDENT INTERVIEW SAMPLE

PROJECT EXCELLENCE

CRITERIA	VARIABLES	NUMBER	PER CENT	SCHOOL PER CENT
Sex	Male	21	53%	50%
	Female	18	46%	50%
Year In E.S.C.H.S.	1st	13	33%	
	2nd	7	67%	
	3rd	5		
	4th	9		
	5th +	5		
Grade	9/10	17	45%	50%
	11/12/13	22	55%	50%
Level	Adv	19	49%	
	Gen	12	31%	
	Bas	8	20%	
Program	Eng	25	64%	63%
	Immer	6	15%	16%
	Fren	8	21%	21%
Goal	Uni/Col	25	64%	
	Work	9	23%	
	Unsure	5	13%	

APPENDIX G

Frequency Distribution: Student Role and Opinions Questionnaire (N = 293)

ITEM	ALWAYS	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	SELDOM	NEVER	NO RESPONSE
1. I make written goals and plans for my school work on a daily or weekly basis.	46 16%	58 20%	97 33%	54 19%	33 12%	1 -
2. I take a test as soon as I finish the unit work. I don't wait to do it later.	74 25%	122 42%	72 25%	19 7%	4 1%	2 1%
3. I set a pace for myself and keep it.	21 7%	83 28%	124 43%	51 18%	13 5%	1 -
4. I work on at least 3 or different courses each day.	6 2%	18 6%	52 18%	116 40%	100 34%	1 -
5. I do school work at home.	50 17%	78 27%	86 30%	50 17%	28 10%	1 -
6. I am able to take available courses in the language and level I want.	163 56%	81 28%	33 11%	7 2%	6 2%	3 1%
7. I spend a lot of school time each day taking it easy and talking with friends.	13 5%	56 19%	122 42%	91 31%	9 3%	2 1%
8. I try to take a test before doing the unit.	1 -	4 1%	20 7%	62 21%	206 70%	- -
9. I have to look for teachers when I need help.	59 20%	89 31%	107 37%	29 10%	8 3%	1 -
10. I keep my own records of how much I've done.	150 52%	57 20%	30 10%	37 13%	17 6%	2 1%
11. I prepare and study for tests before taking them.	144 49%	85 29%	46 16%	15 5%	2 1%	1 -
12. I do my easy courses first and leave the hard ones for later.	22 8%	65 22%	119 41%	71 24%	15 5%	1 -
13. When I do a unit, I work in the centre for that subject.	4 1%	27 9%	91 31%	133 46%	37 13%	1 -
14. I go to my TA for help with units.	7 2%	34 12%	84 29%	104 36%	64 22%	- -
15. I have to choose between seminars and centres that are open only during certain hours.	18 6%	54 18%	88 30%	79 27%	45 15%	9 3%
16. I take part in school activities (sports, clubs, etc.)	65 22%	34 12%	49 17%	74 25%	69 24%	2 1%
17. I decide what I'm doing to work on each day before I get to school.	55 19%	95 32%	66 23%	50 17%	27 9%	- -
18. When I finish a course during the school year, I start working on another right away.	148 51%	82 28%	46 16%	9 3%	5 2%	3 1%

ITEM	ALWAYS	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	SELDOM	NEVER	NO RESPONSE
19. I talk to my TA about personal problems that interfere with my work.	18 6%	17 6%	46 16%	86 29%	126 43%	- -
20. I complete my units in 6 hours or less.	40 14%	84 29%	110 38%	45 16%	12 4%	2 1%
21. I attend optional seminars.	26 9%	65 27%	89 31%	62 21%	48 17%	3 1%
22. Once I start a unit I don't work on anything else until I'm finished.	45 15%	89 30%	100 34%	50 17%	9 3%	- -
23. I go to a subject teacher for help whenever I have problems with a unit.	82 28%	112 38%	71 24%	19 7%	8 3%	1 -
24. I talk about my school work with my parents or guardians.	70 24%	74 25%	66 23%	55 19%	28 10%	- -
25. I have a personal interview with my TA at least every 2 weeks.	66 23%	55 19%	59 20%	69 24%	43 15%	1 -
26. I let my TA plan my school work for me.	12 4%	25 8%	60 21%	88 30%	103 35%	5 2%
27. I spend most of my time at school doing school work.	50 17%	134 46%	74 25%	24 8%	7 2%	4 1%
28. I have trouble reaching my unit goals.	20 7%	74 25%	105 36%	72 25%	21 7%	1 -
29. I work alone.	26 9%	53 18%	98 33%	74 25%	40 1%	2 1%
30. I do units with my friends.	22 8%	71 24%	119 41%	57 20%	23 8%	1 -
31. I talk with my TA about any problems I'm having keeping up with my school work.	16 6%	63 22%	98 34%	86 29%	28 10%	2 1%
32. I get frustrated waiting for help from teachers.	68 23%	91 31%	89 30%	32 11%	13 4%	- -
33. When I have questions, I can get teachers to give me the answers.	12 4%	58 20%	117 40%	85 29%	20 7%	1 -
34. I have problems timetabling the courses I want.	4 1%	35 12%	87 30%	115 39%	49 17%	3 1%
35. I go to a centre and get to work right after the morning attendance.	45 16%	100 34%	80 28%	50 17%	16 6%	2 1%
36. If I need help, I get it from my friends.	20 7%	80 27%	121 41%	59 20%	12 4%	1 -

ITEM	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NO RESPONSE
37. Noise and interruptions make it hard for me to work at school.	50 17%	164 56%	68 23%	10 3%	1 -
38. I'm able to organize my time to get my work done.	3 12%	184 63%	71 24%	4 1%	- -

ITEM	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NO RESPONSE
39. I feel the TA is on my side.	117 40%	152 52%	16 6%	4 1%	4 1%
40. I can really work at my own pace in this school.	86 29%	139 47%	48 16%	14 5%	6 2%
41. I need a teacher pushing me to keep up.	57 20%	83 28%	99 34%	50 17%	4 1%
42. I learn more working in Project Excellence than I did with teachers in a regular classroom.	46 16%	80 27%	79 27%	78 27%	10 3%
43. Learning in Project Excellence is harder than learning from teachers in a regular class.	76 26%	92 31%	81 28%	34 12%	10 3%
44. When I complete a unit I remember what I learned.	19 7%	171 58%	77 26%	22 8%	4 1%
45. I wish I could change TAs.	7 2%	17 6%	117 40%	145 50%	7 2%
46. Overall, my marks have gone up since I entered Project Excellence.	72 25%	140 48%	58 20%	12 4%	11 4%
47. My TA gives me the help and encouragement I need.	82 28%	185 63%	19 7%	3 1%	4 1%
48. I have too much freedom in Project Excellence.	49 17%	89 30%	115 39%	35 12%	5 2%
49. I have too much responsibility for my own learning in this system.	32 11%	89 30%	139 47%	27 9%	6 2%
50. This system of education works for me.	54 18%	129 44%	65 22%	37 13%	8 3%
51. I get the opportunities I need to learn and speak in French.	37 13%	132 45%	78 27%	41 14%	5 2%
52. I think I'm getting a good education here.	49 17%	144 49%	53 18%	33 11%	14 5%
53. I worry about graduating on time.	91 31%	101 35%	62 21%	35 12%	4 1%

	YES	NO	UNSURE
54. Are you doing any better in any particular subjects since you entered Project Excellence?	156 53%	59 20%	77 26%
55. Are you doing a lot worse in any particular subjects since you entered Project Excellence?	99 34%	145 50%	48 16%

	STAY	LEAVE	UNSURE
56. If you could choose now between staying in Project Excellence and going to a traditional school, what would you do?	145 50%	135 46%	13 4%

APPENDIX H

Statistical Profile of Respondents to Parent Role and Opinions Questionnaire
(N = 184)

	VALUE	FREQUENCY	PER CENT
YEARS IN HIGH SCHOOL OF RESPONDENT'S CHILD	1	36	20%
	2	44	2%
	3	36	20%
		46	25%
	5	19	10%
	6	2	1%
	No Response	1	0.5%
		184	100%
YEARS AT E.S.C.H.S. OF RESPONDENT'S CHILD	1	42	23%
	2	41	22%
	3	35	19%
		39	21%
	5	18	10%
	6	2	1%
	No Response	7	4%
		184	100%
SEX OF RESPONDENT'S CHILD	Male	80	44%
	Female	94	51%
	No Response	10	5%
		184	100%
LANGUAGE AND PROGRAM OF RESPONDENT'S CHILD			
English student taking courses in English		101	55%
English student in a French Immersion program		31	17%
French or French/English student taking mainly courses in English		33	18%
French or French/English student taking mainly courses in French		17	9%
No response		2	1%
		184	100%
LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY OF CHILD'S ENGLISH/FRANÇAIS AND MATHEMATICS/MATHÉMATIQUES COURSES	English/Français		
	Advanced	103	56%
	General	61	33%
	Basic	14	8%
	No response	6	3%
		184	100%
	Mathematics/mathèmatiques		
	Advanced	85	46%
	General	62	34%
	Basic	20	11%
	No response	17	9%
		184	100%

POSTSECONDARY SCHOOL PLANS OF RESPONDENT'S CHILD		FREQUENCY	PER CENT
	Go to work	20	11%
	Stay home	3	2%
	Go to university	72	39%
	Go to college	63	34%
	Don't know	22	12%
	Other	4	2%
		184	100%

		FREQUENCY	PER CENT
RESPONDENT IDENTITY	Mother	108	65%
	Father	25	15%
	Guardian (Male)	1	0.5%
	Guardian (Female)	1	0.5%
	Both parents together	28	17%
	Both guardians together	0	0%

	Both guardians together	0	0%
	Other	2	1%
	No response	1	0.5%
		166*	100%
FAMILY SITUATION	Single parent family	19	11%
	Two parent family	144	87%
	Other	3	2%
		166	100%
CHILDREN IN HOUSEHOLD	One	33	20%
	Two	68	41%
	Three	36	22%
	Four	18	11%
	Five	3	2%
	Six	3	2%
	Seven	2	1%
	No response	3	2%
		166	100%
CHILDREN AT E.S.C.H.S.	One	122	74%
	Two	38	23%
	Three	2	1%
	Four	2	1%
	No response	2	1%
		166	100%
CHILDREN GRADUATED FROM PROJECT EXCELLENCE	Zero or blank	135	81%
	One	25	15%
	Two	3	2%
	Three	3	2%
		166	100%

---

* Parents with more than one child at E.S.C.H.S. were asked to complete a separate questionnaire for each child. Eighteen parents submitted two or more questionnaires. Thus, the total number of different parents responding to the survey was 166.

		FREQUENCY	PER CENT
CHILDREN TRANSFERRED OUT OF PROJECT EXCELLENCE	Zero or blank	158	95%
	One	7	4%
	Two	1	1%
		166	100%
CHILDREN DROPPED OUT OF PROJECT EXCELLENCE	Zero or blank	151	91%
	One	15	9%
		166	100%
RESPONDENT'S MOTHER TONGUE	English	113	68%
	French	40	24%
	Other	11	7%
	No response	2	1%
		166	100%
LANGUAGE USED WITH CHILD	English	117	71%
	French	14	8%
	English and French	31	
	Other	2	1%
	No response	1	1%
		166	100%
RESPONDENT'S EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND	Completed high school		
	YES	82	49%
	NO	66	40%
	No response	18	11%
		166	100%

Completed some college or university		
YES	56	34%
NO	63	38%
No response	47	28%
	166	100%

APPENDIX I

Frequency Distribution: Parent Role and Opinions Questionnaire
(N = 184)

		YES	NO	NO RESPONSES
1.	I talk with my child's Teacher Advisor every 2 to 4 weeks about my child's progress, even when there are no problems to discuss.	89 48%	88 48%	7 4%
2.	I talk with my child's Teacher Advisor **ONLY** at report card time, or if there's a problem with my child's work at school.	81 44%	96 52%	7 4%
3.	I receive written progress reports from my child's Teacher Advisor, in addition to report cards.	93 50%	88 48%	3 2%
4.	The Teacher Advisor and I have talked about problems my child is having at school.	142 77%	39 21%	3 2%
5.	The Teacher Advisor and I have talked about situations outside of school that might be affecting my child's school work.	84 46%	96 52%	4 2%
6.	I take part in decisions about which courses my child takes.	125 68%	57 31%	2 1%
7.	I have attended one or more meetings for parents about Project Excellence.	123 67%	60 33%	1 -
8.	I have attended a parent interview **THIS** school year with my child's Teacher Advisor.	86 47%	97 53%	1 -
9.	I am or have been a member of a parent advisory group for Project Excellence.	18 10%	165 90%	1 -
10.	I personally keep track of what units my child is working on.	128 70%	54 29%	2 1%
11.	I personally keep track of how close my child is to achieving her/his unit goals.	153 83%	29 16%	2 1%
12.	I encourage my child to do homework on a regular basis.	161 88%	22 12%	1 -
13.	My child and I have good honest discussions about her/his progress in school.	161 88%	18 10%	5 2%
14.	I've been reading the **Northland Post** articles on Project Excellence this year.	151 82%	32 17%	1 -

		BETTER	NO CHANGE	WORSE	UNSURE	NO RESPONSES
15.	Overall, how have your child's marks changed?	90 49%	65 35%	17 9%	6 3%	6 3%
16.	How have your child's study habits changed?	45 25%	81 44%	52 28%	6 3%	- -
17.	How has the way your child feels about going to school changed?	51 28%	76 41%	45 25%	12 6%	- -

		YES	NO	UNSURE	NO RESPONSES
18.	Is your child doing a lot better in any subjects since she/he entered Project Excellence?	72 39%	81 44%	27 15%	4 2%
19.	Is your child doing a lot worse in any subjects since she/he entered Project Excellence.	41 22%	119 65%	20 11%	4 2%

		STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	UNSURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NO RESPONSES
20.	I communicate with my child's Teacher Advisor frequently enough.	30 16%	105 57%	11 6%	31 17%	7 4%	- -
21.	I am more involved in my child's education than when she/he attended a traditional school.	31 17%	57 31%	21 11%	68 37%	6 3%	1 -
22.	I am more aware of how well my child is doing now than when she/he attended a traditional school.	21 11%	61 33%	25 14%	58 32%	17 9%	2 1%
23.	I understand what my child is expected to do in Project Excellence at E.S.C.H.S.	35 19%	108 59%	21 11%	17 9%	3 2%	- -
24.	I understand what teachers do in Project Excellence.	16 9%	70 38%	53 29%	19 10%	25 14%	1 -
25.	I understand what Teacher Advisors do in Project Excellence.	20 11%	118 64%	20 11%	15 8%	11 6%	- -
26.	I know what to do to help my child succeed in Project Excellence.	19 10%	79 43%	52 28%	18 10%	13 7%	3 2%
27.	My child's Teacher Advisor and I work as a team in decisions about my child's education.	21 11%	86 47%	17 9%	44 24%	14 8%	2 1%
28.	I knew enough about Project Excellence when I agreed to enrol my child at E.S.C.H.S.	10 5%	53 29%	21 11%	54 29%	38 21%	8 4%
29.	My child is having difficulty getting the credits she/he needs to graduate on time.	38 21%	41 22%	23 12%	50 27%	29 16%	3 2%
30.	My child has too much freedom in Project Excellence.	49 27%	40 22%	25 14%	46 25%	23 12%	1 -
31.	My child has too much responsibility for her/his own learning in Project Excellence.	37 20%	38 21%	28 15%	55 30%	23 12%	3 2%
32.	This system of education works well for my child.	32 17%	54 29%	30 17%	35 19%	32 17%	1 -
33.	I think my child is getting a good education at E.S.C.H.S.	28 15%	55 30%	49 27%	23 12%	27 15%	2 1%
34.	My child has the opportunities she/he needs to speak and learn in French at school.	20 11%	79 43%	26 14%	34 18%	20 11%	5 3%

35.	If you could choose now between keeping your child in Project Excellence and sending him/her to a traditional school, what would you do?	SEND TO A TRADITIONAL SCHOOL	82 (45%)
		KEEP HERE	93 (50%)
		UNSURE	3 (2%)
		NO RESPONSES	6 (3%)

Appendix J

Curriculum Sample Criteria and Distribution

CURRICULUM SAMPLE CRITERIA

1. Subjects
   - minimum one in each compulsory credit area
   - some required courses

2. Grade level
   - minimum two for each grade in different subjects
   - sample of at least two academic levels per grade
   - total for each grade to approximate the per cent of courses for that grade in the school

3. Level of difficulty (basic, general, advanced)
   - minimum two per grade level
   - not the same subject area at same level of difficulty
   - total for each level of difficulty should approximate per cent of courses for that level in the school

4. Language (English/French)
   - apply same criteria
   - total for each language should approximate the per cent of courses offered in that language in the school

CURRICULUM SAMPLE

SUBJECT AREA	LEVEL	GRADE				
		9	10	11	12	13/OAC
English/Anglais	Adv					E
	Gen	E	E			
	Bas					
Français/French	Adv					F
	Gen					
	Bas	F				
Mathematics/ Mathématiques	Adv		F			
	Gen				E	
	Bas	E				
Science/ Sciences	Adv			E	F	E
	Gen	F				
	Bas		E			
Geography/ Géographie	Adv				E	
	Gen		E			
	Bas					
History/Histoire	Adv			F		
	Gen		E			
	Bas					
Physical Ed/ Éducation physique	Adv					
	Gen				E	
	Bas					
Commercial/ Commerce	Adv					
	Gen			E		
	Bas					
Family Studies/ Études familiales	Adv	E				
	Gen					
	Bas		E			
Technical/ Technique	Adv					
	Gen			E		
	Bas		F			
Arts	Adv					
	Gen			F		
	Bas					
Guidance/ Orientation	Adv					
	Gen				F	
	Bas					

COURSE DISTRIBUTION - SCHOOL VS. CURRICULUM SAMPLE

	SAMPLE	SCHOOL
Grade 9/10	47%	48%
Grade 11/12	45%	40%
Grade 13/OACs	8%	12%
Advanced	32%	36%
General	47%	44%
Basic	21%	20%
English	56%	64%
French	44%	36%

APPENDIX K

Average Marks by Subject

SUBJECT	AVERAGE MARKS 1982/83-1984/85	AVERAGE MARKS 1986/87
English/Anglais	58.25 (N=1573) sd 16.36	77.23 (N=291) sd 6.76
Français/French	62.29 (N=686) sd 15.68	80.68 (N=154) sd 7.64
Mathematics*/ Mathématiques	61.06 (N=1452) sd 18.49	80.36 (N=152) sd 8.03
Science/ Sciences	64.74 (N=1073) sd 17.00	80.45 (N=159) sd 8.31
History/ Histoire	62.15 (N=846) sd 16.45	81.80 (N=128) sd 10.07
Geography/ Géographie	64.00 (N=641) sd 17.21	83.44 (N=119) sd 5.97
Physical Education/ Éducation physique	65.18 (N=825) sd 13.67	84.16 (N=113) sd 10.15
Art/Arts	60.48 (N=230) sd 16.12	81.72 (N=39) sd 6.73
Music/Musique	64.46 (N=175) sd 17.05	84.32 (N=34) sd 3.05
Commercial*/ Commerce	63.48 (N=1291) sd 19.44	78.46 (N=141) sd 8.98
Family Studies/ Études familiales	65.64 (N=269) sd 18.21	85.89 (N=73) sd 4.22
Technical/Technique	62.70 (N=1175) sd 15.75	81.11 (N=152) sd 5.41

*Computer courses deleted from Mathematics and Commercial.

LEGEND. Top figure = average mark in a subject area
Middle figure = number of marks recorded in subject area
Bottom figure = standard deviation (measures the amount of variation in scores across students)

APPENDIX L
Average Marks by Subject and Level

SUBJECT	LEVEL	1982/83-1984/85	1986/87
ENGLISH/ ANGLAIS	Basic	62.27 (N=162) sd 16.29	77.43 (N=42) sd 7.80
	General	54.03 (N=780) sd 17.27	74.69 (N=124) sd 5.55
	Advanced	62.51 (N=601) sd 13.70	79.69 (N=123) sd 6.66
FRANÇAIS/ FRENCH	Basic	63.22 (N=32) sd 13.35	80.00 (N=18) sd 9.31
	General	57.69 (N=205) sd 17.07	77.35 (N=34) sd 6.83
	Advanced	64.58 (N=431) sd 14.27	81.90 (N=102) sd 7.30
MATHEMATICS/ MATHÉMATIQUES	Basic	63.41 (N=108) sd 14.51	83.24 (N=17) sd 6.69
	General	57.57 (N=696) sd 18.40	78.72 (N=39) sd 7.04
	Advanced	64.45 (N=647) sd 18.53	81.32 (N=96) sd 8.21
SCIENCE/ SCIENCES	Basic	58.97 (N=37) sd 13.42	73.67 (N=3) sd 7.02
	General	59.57 (N=421) sd 19.15	76.92 (N=53) sd 8.15
	Advanced	68.70 (N=612) sd 14.40	82.46 (N=103) sd 7.76
HISTORY/ HISTOIRE	Basic	63.05 (N=78) sd 17.68	76.75 (N=16) sd 19.60
	General	55.01 (N=289) sd 17.54	81.82 (N=40) sd 8.76
	Advanced	66.41 (N=347) sd 14.07	81.00 (N=49) sd 6.54
GEOGRAPHY/ GÉOGRAPHIE	Basic	68.45 (N=20) sd 9.77	(no marks recorded)

General	55.97 (N=245) sd 18.06	82.45 (N=42) sd 5.98
Advanced	69.04 (N=355) sd 14.75	84.00 (N=76) sd 5.98

LEGEND. Top figure = average mark in a subject area
Middle figure = number of marks recorded in subject area
Bottom figure = standard deviation (measures the amount of variation in scores across students)

APPENDIX M

Average Marks by Subject and Grade

SUBJECT		GRADE 9	10	11	12	13
ENGLISH ANGLAIS	1983-85	57.75 (N=447) sd16.23	57.16 (N=367) sd16.78	56.88 (N=332) sd17.31	60.88 (N=348) sd14.71	60.35 (N=79) sd16.82
	1987	76.20 (N=81) sd6.12	79.70 (N=61) sd7.05	77.30 (N=71) sd6.44	75.96 (N=67) sd6.06	78.45 (N=11) sd6.76
FRANÇAIS FRENCH	1983-85	59.80 (N=293) sd17.55	61.90 (N=159) sd12.17	62.61 (N=99) sd15.40	67.52 (N=108) sd14.37	69.70 (N=27) sd11.49
	1987	79.14 (N=64) sd7.78	80.04 (N=28) sd7.29	82.68 (N=28) sd7.86	81.69 (N=26) sd6.99	84.88 (N=8) sd7.04
SCIENCE SCIENCES	1983-85	62.37 (N=366) sd18.71	66.08 (N=249) sd15.22	63.90 (N=217) sd17.00	65.80 (N=95) sd15.03	68.92 (N=146) sd15.66
	1987	78.36 (N=67) sd8.32	83.63 (N=40) sd8.34	79.04 (N=28) sd7.74	86.64 (N=11) sd6.56	79.23 (N=13) sd5.69
HISTORY HISTOIRE	1983-85	58.30 (N=177) sd19.13	60.70 (N=363) sd16.36	65.45 (N=187) sd15.08	67.47 (N=34) sd12.04	66.92 (N=85) sd11.98
	1987	79.91 (N=23) sd16.80	81.73 (N=49) sd8.37	84.31 (N=42) sd7.20	78.60 (N=5) sd8.44	77.00 (N=9) sd6.00
GEOGRAPHY GÉOGRAPHIE	1983-85	61.72 (N=393) sd17.24	65.82 (N=111) sd18.94	72.57 (N=42) sd11.53	62.86 (N=36) sd19.26	70.37 (N=59) sd11.23
	1987	82.92 (N=75) sd6.04	86.00 (N=20) sd5.32	82.64 (N=11) sd7.35	83.29 (N=7) sd4.46	83.00 (N=6) sd5.48
MATH MATHS	1983-85	60.70 (N=454) sd17.51	57.86 (N=375) sd18.18	58.47 (N=247) sd18.75	64.32 (N=209) sd17.32	69.39 (N=167) sd19.79
	1987	78.97 (N=59) sd8.64	79.13 (N=55) sd6.37	84.50 (N=6) sd9.52	84.79 (N=14) sd8.33	83.83 (N=18) sd7.95

LEGEND. Top figure = average mark in a subject area
Middle figure = number of marks recorded in subject area
Bottom figure = standard deviation (measures the amount of variation in scores across students)

APPENDIX N

Comparison of Grade 13 Averages to Provincial Averages

YEAR AND AVERAGE GRADE 13 MARKS*

	PROVINCIAL AVERAGES				ESCHS AVERAGES	
					(Pre-PE)	(Post-PE)
SUBJECT**	1982/83	1983/84	1984/85	1985/86	1982/83-85/86	1987
ENGLISH (Literature)	69.8	69.8	70.4	71.0	60.4 N=79	78.5 N=11
FRANÇAIS/ FRENCH	73.8	73.7	74.0	74.0	69.7 N=27	84.9 N=8
MATH/MATHS (Algebra, Calculus, Relations)	73.3	72.9	73.3	73.3	69.4 N=167	83.8 N=18
SCIENCE/ SCIENCES (Biology, Chemistry, Physics)	71.3	71.1	71.5	71.8	68.9 N=146	79.2 N=13
HISTORY/ HISTOIRE ECONOMICS/ ÉCONOMIE	70.1	70.1	70.5	70.8	66.9 N=85	77.0 N=9
GEOGRAPHY GÉOGRAPHIE	69.9	69.9	70.0	70.7	70.4 N=59	83.0 N=6

* Provincial averages are computed from marks 50 and above. For this comparison, Grade 13 marks below 50 at E.S.C.H.S. were likewise deleted from the analysis.

** Ministry averages combine both English and French results. Comparisons are made only to those Grade 13 courses listed by the ministry which are offered at E.S.C.H.S. Ministry averages reported for separate courses within a discipline (e.g., biology, chemistry, and physics in science) were recalculated to get a single average for the subject as per our analysis at E.S.C.H.S.

APPENDIX O

Profile of Transfer Student Interview Sample

	I.F.S.S.	JEUNESSE NORD*	TOTAL
YEARS IN SCHOOL			
1		1	1
2	1		1
3	3	2	5
4	5	4	9
5		1	1
6	1		1
GRADE LEVEL**			
9	2	1	3
10	2	1	3
11	3	1	4
12	2	5	7
13/OAC	1		1
PROGRAM			
ENGLISH	9		9
FRENCH/ENGLISH	1		1
FRENCH		8	8
LEVEL			
ADVANCED	2	5	7
GENERAL	8	3	11
BASIC	-	-	-
YEARS IN PROJECT EXCELLENCE			
HALF YR.	1	2	3
ONE YR.	3	4	7
ONE & HALF YR.	4	1	5
TWO YR.	2	1	3

---

* Background data responses missing from one of the nine students interviewed at Jeunesse Nord.

** Student's self report judgements provide the basis for classifying students at one or another grade level.

APPENDIX P

Recommendations of Parents, Students, and Teachers

Recommendation *** higher frequency of mention**	**Parents**	**Students**	**Teachers**	**Heads**
Centres and work areas:				
*restrict movement to/from centres		X	X	X
keep centres open all the time	X	X		
provide "quiet" areas for work		X	X	
provide "quiet" and "talk" areas for different work		X		
*tighter supervision in centres more monitoring for noise	X	X	X	X
more work space, larger centres		X		
structure centres/work areas so students cannot leave until break				X
Noise:				
*restrict movement	X	X	X	X
Structuring student work:				
*TAs need to provide more structure or deadlines for student work, "no deals"	X	X	X	X
develop "bottom line" for poor performers				X
tighter supervision of student work	X			
tighten up rules on how long students have to work on units		X		
professional assistance or "help" in centres, i.e. interns, teaching aides	X	X	X	
more "breaks" to aid student attention				X
Seminars and mode of instruction:				
develop a team approach in department and across departments			X	
organize seminars so students don't have to wait			X	
compulsory seminars in some subjects				X
more large group "class-like" situations	X	X		
offer choice of class or independent work to students in some areas	X	X		
younger students should have more group "class" experiences; older students more individualized	X			
Discipline:				
be stricter about consequences for students re discipline			X	
have more spot checks re students leaving building		X		
have consistent, standard policy for behaviour in ALL centres and halls			X	

Recommendation	Parents	Students	Teachers	Heads
Teachers and access:				
*more teachers in difficult or high demand subjects	X	X	X	X
look for ways to avoid line-ups for teachers	X			
Teacher/TA role:				
more time for planning and collegial discussion			X	
equalize workload for teachers			X	
develop a "pool" of markers			X	
more assistance and training for TA role: motivating students			X	
Curriculum:				
build in "real" curriculum time			X	X
continue to look for ways to improve curriculum			X	X
develop ongoing system for monitoring quality of units			X	X
look for better ways to evaluate curriculum			X	
Testing:				
compare testing with other schools	X			
*bring back final exams	X		X	
School Improvement:				
develop ways to address remedial needs, reading problems			X	
fewer courses per teacher			X	
develop public relations program for work with community	X		X	
administration should be talking to parents, hear their concerns, not waiting for them to come in	X			
Choice:				
students should have a choice about which system they work best in	X			
school should give students opportunities for experience with both systems	X			
parents should look at individual child when deciding about school choice: this not good for unmotivated	X			